



*Research Article*

# **Rudolf Bultmann's Theological Hermeneutics and the Quest for Authentic Existence: A Heideggerian Analysis**

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## **Abstract**

Rudolf Bultmann is a German theologian and philosopher. Rudolf Bultmann then on his early years was influenced by Martin Heidegger. Having seen Heidegger's work, Bultmann sees existential analysis as an ally in theology. The compatibility of existentialism with the theological task is based upon Bultmann's belief that the basic religious questions are questions of existence. The first part of this paper depicts the concept of Heidegger (Dasein) and its transition on how it influenced Bultmann's theological hermeneutics. The second part of this paper is the introductory part of Bultmann's concept. The third part of this paper depicts how Bultmann used existential interpretation as an ally in interpreting the New Testament and followed by the conclusion. The given chapters will answer the problem on the difficulty of attaining authentic existence brought by modernity. Given the challenges brought by modern science, the quest for a biblical life and authentic existence is difficult to attain. Man relies heavily on science rather than believing on morals taught by religion. With this being said, religion becomes separated. Therefore, the need to interpret existentially the religious message in the New Testament is important because it does not also provide solution to the challenges of attaining authenticity but it also makes religion relevant in man's quest towards attaining authentic existence. This paper employs a phenomenological approach in determining problems and challenges brought by modernization of science. Through phenomenological approach, the need for demythologization must be employed. As a result, the need to make religion significant in today's era would be possible. Also, this paper contributes to the ongoing debate on separation of faith and reason. Hence, the aim of this paper is to present a solution to the challenges brought by modernity through interpreting existentially the New Testament.

**Keywords:** Existential Hermeneutics, Demythologization, Phenomenology, Dasein, Theological Existentialism, Biblical Hermeneutics



## **1. Introduction**

With the rise of the modern era, science prevails over religion (Peters, 2018). The untroubled revolution is being led by an unforeseen and astounding intellectual trend, namely, the re-asking of the God question within the orbit of scientific discussion about the natural world (Peters, 2017). Disease was no longer a result of sin, it is caused by a natural ailment of a human person. Disasters were not a sign of an angry divine being, but is a sign of a scientific activity. The emergence of science created a profound crisis for religion and gave a fundamental conflict towards religion (Ungureanu, 2018). For this reason, religious books were no longer reliable because it contains untruthful stories and inaccurate historical events that is against the scientific explanation about the causalities. Galileo, Kepler and Newton's understanding of natural laws led them and others to an increasing awareness of power regarding natural scientific methodology as acceptable (Dirk, 2019). To supplement this claim, Contemporary theology–science dialogue views the natural sciences as a locus theologicus, a site where theological reflection can be enriched by scientific insights. Interdisciplinary curricula and philosophical engagement are essential for integrating scientific knowledge into theology, moving beyond conflict toward constructive dialogue (Tanzella-Nitti, 2024).

Bultmann did not side with either scientific debunkers of religion or religious conservatives, but he provided a fundamental new understanding of the nature of the science and faith conflict (Johnson, 1973). According to Rudolf Bultmann, the real conflict between science and religion was not to be located at the point of their differing world views. Bultmann argued that the New Testament is expressed through an ancient mythological worldview that modern people no longer share. The three-tiered universe (heaven above, earth below, underworld beneath), and supernatural interventions belonged to the cosmology of the first century. According to Bultmann, if Christianity insists on accepting this worldview literally, modern individuals shaped by science may reject the gospel entirely (Bultmann, 2001). For him, the primitive world views presented in the Bible were an accident of history and not an essential part of the biblical faith (Bultmann, 1961).

Influenced by Martin Heidegger, Bultmann viewed human existence as characterized by anxiety, freedom, decision, and authenticity. Heidegger argues that human beings — which he calls Dasein, ordinarily live in an inauthentic mode because they are absorbed in everyday social existence (Heidegger, 1962). Men resort to comfort through engaging with modern science. This will only grant them temporary comfort. Hence the manifestation of unending quest for authentic existence would continue to exist. It is the task of Bultmann to make men realize that there is a way to attain authentic existence. That is, interpreting



existentially the message of the New Testament. Bultmann sought to resolve the tension between the mythological language of the New Testament and the modern reader's need for authentic existential meaning. By interpreting biblical myths as expressions of human existence rather than literal accounts, he aimed to make faith intelligible and personally transformative in the contemporary world. The proclamation of Christ calls individuals to a decision of faith here and now. Thus, the resurrection of Christ is not primarily important as a historical event to be empirically proven, but as a proclamation that confronts people with the possibility of new existence.

This interpretation shifts Christianity from abstract doctrine to lived transformation, making faith dynamic and personally meaningful. Bultmann's hermeneutics emphasizes that faith is not merely assent to historical facts but a personal existential encounter with God (Philopedia, 2026). Each man must realize his own selfhood or his own being through the process of his historical decisions (Johnson, 1973). Bultmann managed to provide significant contributions to our understanding of the history and religion. The intellectual honesty and scientific discipline were joined with a profound personal faith. For Bultmann, such enticements are persuasive and may not fill what truly is our existential nature (Johnson, 1973). He proceeds to provide a definite way of changing our lives (Johnson, 1973). He, therefore, proposes an existential interpretation of the Christian faith, not to update its teachings, but to make it relevant and to make use of it as an effective instrument of change in the lives of those who hear and respond.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

Rudolf Bultmann's theology can be fruitfully studied through a phenomenological lens, as it emphasizes faith not as historical assent but as an existential encounter that transforms human existence. Note that a phenomenological approach in research methodology is a qualitative strategy that seeks to uncover the essence of lived experience by focusing on how phenomena appear to consciousness (Emiliussen, 2021). It emphasizes participants' subjective meaning structures. Recent scholarship argues that Bultmann develops a unique phenomenology of authentic existence as an event, moving beyond Heidegger's focus on anxiety as the central horizon of human finitude. In this way, Bultmann's thought situates revelation within the transcendental scope of lived experience, offering a paradigm in which faith is understood as a transformative event of encounter rather than empirical fact (Cassidy-Deketelaere, 2026).

This shift reframes revelation and faith as existential encounters that transform the being of Dasein, rather than as historical assent or empirical occurrences. In phenomenological terms, Bultmann's theology bridges the

empirical and transcendental by showing how love functions as an event that reshapes human existence, thereby offering a richer interpretive paradigm for studying faith and existence. Bultmann radically develops and improves Heidegger's phenomenology.

### ***2.1 Martin Heidegger's Ontological Hermeneutics and his Influence to Bultmann***

Martin Heidegger sees being as hermeneutical (Truwant, 2022). Starting from the phenomenological approach on understanding the Dasein, Martin Heidegger goes back to the very definition of phenomenology. The definition of phenomenology, according to its Greek etymological meaning, is the manifestation of the "what is" - rooted in the original Greek terms *phainómenon* (φαίνόμενον, meaning "that which appears") and *lógos* "λόγος", meaning "study" (Britannica, 2026). The mind according to Heidegger, does not project a meaning of the phenomenon, but rather, what appears is an ontological manifestation of the thing itself (Palmer, 1969). Where the thing that manifests itself to us, directs us to see its own existence. Hence, this is the true essence of understanding, where we are led by the things that are in existent in order to see their being. In other words, phenomenology is a means of being led by the phenomenon through a way of access genuinely belonging to it.

This method is significant to Martin Heidegger's hermeneutical theory because interpretation is not grounded in the human consciousness, but interpretation is grounded in the manifestation of the things that we encounter or the things that directs us to see how they reveal their being (Palmer, 1969). Thus, these presuppositions were considered by Heidegger to develop our understanding of the being-in-the-world because the problem lies in the being itself, on how the being is interrogated and evaluated by its occurrence. Heidegger sees that ontology must turn to the process of understanding and interpretation through which things appear (Palmer, 1969). It must direct the human existence and make the invisible be visible.

Hermeneutics has become the interpretation of the Dasein. Heidegger asserts hermeneutics as an ontological understanding and interpretation that renders the disclosure of being of things and the potentialities of Dasein's own being. His assumption will take us to his understanding of the world because the understanding and the world are inseparable parts of the Dasein. The world is not a mere world that covers wholly all humanity, but it covers the wholeness of one's personal being (Palmer, 1969). A world that drowns human beings with its vastness and unending understanding, the being that shows itself translates into meaningfulness. The term "meaningfulness" is deeper than logical system of language, because the "meaningfulness" is founded in the text itself. The understanding is embedded in the context which is being made explicit by interpretation.



Heidegger's central concern lies in uncovering the meaning of Being, and he employs the term Dasein—literally “Being-there”—to describe human existence (Backman, 2025). Through Dasein, Heidegger seeks to articulate what it means for human beings to exist, emphasizing their awareness of themselves and the decisions they continually make (Heidegger, 1927/1962). Human beings confront ultimate questions, and the most profound source of anxiety is the awareness of their own mortality (Heidegger, 1927/1962). Heidegger helped to remove the mystery from the concept of Being and enabled humans to see that this is an issue which concerns every person. He helps to clarify an understanding of man's own being. His philosophy clarifies the meaning of human existence, revealing that each person is the Being of their own world (Kovacs, 2010).

For Heidegger, humans are not best described as objects but as a distinctive mode of Being (Backman, 2025). They find themselves thrown into the world, and they must choose how to be. To Heidegger a human being is best described not as an object but as a particular mode of being. Heidegger believes that the Greek-derived word phenomenon, translated as “that which reveals itself,” enables human beings to understand the meaning of existence. Henceforth, this phenomenological approach deeply influenced Rudolf Bultmann, who saw Heidegger's ontological interpretation as a valuable ally in theology (Kovacs, 2010). Bultmann sees Martin Heidegger's ontological interpretation as an ally in his theology. Bultmann's interpretation of the New Testament is grounded in Heidegger's contribution to hermeneutics, which provided a framework for existential understanding of faith (Congdon, 2017).

Rudolf Bultmann argued that philosophy and the New Testament converge in their understanding of human existence, both addressing the fundamental reality of life. His engagement with Martin Heidegger's existential philosophy provided the conceptual framework for his exegetical and theological reflections (Macquarrie, 1973). Man as a being, realizes himself in his actions, decisions, and all acts regarding on his own existence (Johnson, 1973). This existence then is characterized by “historicity.” With these assertions, the being of man is identical with “becoming” a “possibility-to-be.” Therefore, it is within this existence (historicity), that all the problems are found or being manifested and will be encountered. By this, humans will need guidance to solve the problems he encounters. This guidance is the religious message hidden within the texts of the New Testament. It can be noted that, man must come to know God through existential interpretation. Bultmann believes that “the theologian leaves a space free in the middle and hopes that God himself will intervene, since only God can say his Word (Chalamet, 2005).”

Bultmann found Heidegger's ontological hermeneutics to be a valuable ally in theology, recognizing existential interpretation as a method for uncovering the meaning of Scripture. Through this lens, the hidden religious truths of the

New Testament become evident, guiding the moral development of human existence (Congdon, 2017).

### ***2.2 Criticisms against Bultmann***

Though his aim is for human beings to attain authentic existence, Bultmann's existential theology remains to be a target of criticisms among contemporary theologians, philosophers, and biblical scholars. His program of demythologization provoked sharp debate among theologians, philosophers, and biblical scholars. While Bultmann sought to make the Christian message intelligible to modern readers by aligning it with Heidegger's existential philosophy, critics argue that his method risks reducing Christianity to subjective experience and undermining its historical foundations. Bultmann's reliance on form criticism and existential interpretation raised concerns about the fragmentation of Scripture (Petersen, 1960). These criticisms highlight the tension between Bultmann's innovative hermeneutics and the enduring demand for a theology rooted in both history and revelation.

Another criticism is his reliance on Heidegger. His reliance to Heidegger makes his theological claim become subjective. As what Cahill said in his article titled *The Theological Significance of Bultmann*, "What is available to the interpreter depends on how responsive he is to the range of human possibility," on "what sort of interpretation . . . the exegete has of himself as a man (Cahill, 1977)." Hence, all textual interpretation is determined by self-interpretation. This approach risks obscuring the objective purpose of the New Testament, which is to reveal absolute truths that guide modern human beings toward authentic existence. According to these critics, Bultmann emphasized faith as an existential encounter rather than assent to historical facts.

### ***2.3 Bultmann's answers to the Criticisms***

There are earlier attempts to demythologize the religious texts, others mentioned an allegorical interpretation. While some criticizes these texts in reference to their stands. Many liberal theologians reduced the kerygma to a few basic principles of religion and ethics (Bultmann, 1961). Note that kerygma refers to the proclamation of the Christian message that confronts individuals with a call to authentic existence before God, interpreted through existential hermeneutics rather than mythological cosmology (Philopedia, 2026). Thus, for these thinkers, the enduring truths of religion and morality were eternal and not dependent on the cultural conditions or individuals who first articulated them.

Bultmann, however, rejected this liberal approach. He argued that dismissing the mythological language of the Bible as historically irrelevant undermines the objectivity of myth and obscures the centrality of the Christ-event (Bultmann, 1961). As a result, it does not emphasize the Christ-event. To eliminate myth is to silence the proclamation itself, since Christ's life and message are expressed in mythological terms that confront the modern hearer.



Therefore, Bultmann places hermeneutics within the sphere of historical understanding. Like Heidegger, Bultmann also believed in the historicity of the human being. According to Bultmann, “God is truly present to man in the Word which transcends the limitations of history (Bultmann, 1961).” He further states, “Jesus Christ confronts men in the kerygma and nowhere else (Bultmann, 1961).”

The sacred scripture continues to offer man a new understanding of himself. These sacred texts speak to one’s existence in the present. Bultmann opposed any attempt to objectify God or to render divine reality as a permanent object of thought (O’Meara, 1967). For him, God cannot be reduced to a permanent concept but must be encountered existentially in proclamation. Thus, as the kerygma is proclaimed, the hearer is confronted with the demand for a decision on his self-understanding. When the kerygma is genuinely heard and embraced, the believer experiences freedom (Cahill, 1977). This liberation entails release from anxiety over past failures and disappointments, as well as from fear of the future. These accounts will further bring us to the background of Bultmann’s concept.

#### ***2.4 A Historical Understanding***

Rudolf Bultmann’s inquiry into hermeneutics centers on two major issues: the necessity of pre-understanding and the openness to the meaning of human existence. He firmly rejects allegorical interpretation and extreme dogmatic prejudices, insisting instead on a historically grounded approach. As Bultmann himself writes:

The question of exegesis without presuppositions in the sense of unprejudiced exegesis must be distinguished from this same question in the other sense in which it can be raised. And in this second sense, we must say that there cannot be any such thing as a presuppositionless exegesis. That there is no such exegesis in fact, because every exegete is determined by his own individuality, in the sense of his special biases and habits, his gifts and his weaknesses, has no significance in principle. For in the sense of the word, it is precisely his “individuality” that the exegete ought to eliminate by educating himself to the kind of hearing that is interested in nothing other than the subject matter of which the text speaks. However, the one presupposition that cannot be dismissed is the historical method of interrogating the text. Indeed, exegesis as the interpretation of historical texts is a part of the science of history (Bultmann, 1963).

For Bultmann, historical events form the indispensable context of interpretation. He argues that exegesis is inevitably shaped by individuality—biases, habits, and perspectives—but insists that the interpreter



must discipline themselves to focus solely on the subject matter of the text. His first concern, therefore, is the understanding of history as a unified continuum of cause and effect, where individual events are interconnected within a closed historical process (Bultmann, 1987).

His second concern emphasizes that the interpreter must discern what the text reveals about the meaning of human existence. Interpretation, in this sense, is not merely about reconstructing historical facts but about articulating the existential significance of Scripture for the individual. Thus, history becomes the sphere in which human existence unfolds, offering possibilities for authentic self-understanding. Bultmann further observes that interpretation does not arise from the incomparability of author and interpreter but from their shared existential context. Both live within the same horizon of existence, and it is this commonality that makes interpretation possible (Painter, 2015).

While Bultmann's hermeneutics profoundly shaped twentieth-century theology, his approach is not without problems. Critics argue that his insistence on the historical method as the sole presupposition risks conflating textual interpretation with historical reconstruction, thereby blurring the distinction between the meaning of a text and the use of that meaning by an interpreter (JSTOR, 1975). Barth argued that Bultmann's reliance on the historical method subordinated theology to historiography, thereby making faith dependent on human reconstruction of past events. For Barth, revelation is not a product of historical analysis but a sovereign act of God that confronts humanity in Jesus Christ (Barth, 1956).

By treating the historical method as the unavoidable presupposition, Bultmann risked undermining the objective reality of the resurrection, which Barth insisted must be received as God's decisive act in history rather than existentially reinterpreted (Bultmann, 1963). Barth maintained that faith arises not from historical-critical conclusions but from the living Word of God, which speaks independently of methodological constraints. Thus, Barth's criticism underscores the danger of Bultmann's position: it risks emptying theology of its divine objectivity by grounding it in human historical analysis, thereby obscuring the radical, revelatory character of God's Word (McGrath, 2015). Moreover, his reliance on existential categories—drawn heavily from Heidegger—has been criticized as overly subjective, reducing the Christ-event to an existential encounter rather than a concrete historical reality (McGrath, 2015).

Bultmann's hermeneutics opened new avenues for understanding Scripture in relation to human existence, it also risks undermining the objectivity of biblical texts by privileging existential interpretation over historical particularity. This tension remains one of the most enduring criticisms of his work.



### ***2.5 Bultmann on Myth***

Bultmann recognized the necessity of making biblical texts intelligible to modern audiences. As both professor and preacher, his aim was to render the kerygma—the proclamation of the Word—tangible and accessible, whether in the classroom or the church (Jacob, 2024). According to Bultmann, “Mythology is the use of imagery to express the otherworldly in terms of this world and the divine in terms of human life, the other side in terms of this side (Bartsch, 1972).” He further explains that “Mythology is the presentation of the otherworldly in terms of this world, and the divine in terms of human life; the presentation of the other side in terms of this side—for example, God’s transcendence is expressed as spatial distance (Salm, 2019).”

In the pre-scientific era, myth functioned as a means of explaining otherwise inexplicable phenomena. For instance, divine transcendence was often expressed through spatial imagery. Myth thus provided a symbolic framework in which material realities conveyed immaterial power. As Bultmann observes, “Mythological thought regards the divine activity whether in nature or in history as an interference with the course of nature, history, or the life of the soul—a tearing of it asunder, a miracle in fact (Bultmann, 1961).”

Mythological explanation also reflects humanity’s conviction about its origin and purpose, which must be sought beyond the finite world. Because of human finitude, the quest for meaning is directed toward the Infinite, the transcendent Being. Myth expresses humanity’s awareness that it is not master of its own existence (Bartsch, 1972). It conveys dependence not only on visible forces but especially on those beyond the known world. Finally, myth embodies the belief that deliverance from worldly forces is possible through transcendence.

For Bultmann, however, myth requires critical examination. Its imagery, with its claim to objective validity, obscures its true purpose: to speak of a transcendent power governing humanity and the world. He insists that God’s transcendence cannot be objectified or reduced to human categories of space, time, and causality. God’s revelation, he argues, cannot be manipulated by human beings; it is accessible only through faith, not through rational or cosmological deduction (Bultmann, 1961). Bultmann further contends that the universe is self-contained, meaning divine incursions cannot be empirically documented. Natural events are visible, but their ultimate meaning lies in God’s hidden activity. Yet mythology is problematic because it projects human feelings and categories onto reality, thereby objectifying God (Salm, 2019). For this reason, Bultmann advocates demythologization. He argues:

We are compelled to ask whether mythological language is not simply an attempt to express the meaning of the historical figure of Jesus and the events of his life; in other words, the significance of these as a figure and event of



salvation. If that be so, we can dispense with the objective form in which they are cast (Bultmann, 1961).

Demythologization does not reject myth but interprets it existentially, uncovering its meaning for human existence. In this way, Bultmann demonstrates that the importance of New Testament mythology lies not in its imagery but in the existential understanding it conveys. Thus, demythologization is essential for interpreting biblical texts—not to eliminate myth, but to reveal its existential truth (Macquarrie, 1973).

### **3. Results**

#### ***3.1 Demythologization***

How can a modern person accept what he finds in the Bible? This modern man would have to sacrifice his scientific intellect to accept what is found in the Bible. With this problem, Rudolf Bultmann proposes a solution: an existential interpretation of the New Testament. He states:

Our task is to produce an existentialist interpretation of the dualistic mythology of the New Testament along similar lines. When, for instance, we read of demonic powers ruling the world and holding mankind in bondage, does the understanding of human existence which underlies such language offer a solution to the riddle of human life which will be acceptable even to the non-mythological mind of today? Of course, we must not take this to imply that the New Testament presents us with an anthropology like that which modern science can give us. It cannot be proved by logic or demonstrated by an appeal to factual evidence. And this is why we must discover whether the New Testament offers man an understanding of himself which will challenge him to a genuine existential decision (Bultmann, 1961).

Bultmann focuses mainly on extracting the essential message of the New Testament. He tries to make the message credible by a method called demythologization, whose goal is to set free the original understanding of existence through categories drawn from Martin Heidegger's existential anthropology. In other words, demythologization seeks to uncover religious truths hidden in biblical texts by appropriating existential interpretation (Macquarrie, 1973). Demythologization aims to strip away the mythological elements of the New Testament that are incompatible with contemporary thought. Bultmann argues that ancient cosmological narratives—such as supernatural interventions and apocalyptic events—should be interpreted as myths that reveal deeper truths about human existence rather than literal historical accounts (Rainbow, 2022).

While Bultmann sought to make the New Testament intelligible to modern minds, his demythologization has been criticized for privileging

philosophy over revelation, undermining the historicity of Christian faith, and reducing salvation to existential self-understanding. The objections remind us that Christianity is not merely a philosophy of existence but a proclamation of God's decisive acts in history. Karl Barth argues that demythologization undermines the historical basis of Christianity. Barth insisted that the Gospel cannot be reduced to existential categories; it is grounded in real events like the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. To reinterpret these as mere inward experiences is "formally an impossible enterprise" because salvation depends on God's actual work in history (Barth, 1959).

For Barth, to reinterpret these events as mere inward experiences is formally an impossible enterprise since salvation depends on God's actual work in history (Bromiley, 1959). Barth's concern about undermining Christianity's historical basis misinterprets the purpose of existential interpretation. Bultmann does not deny the incarnation, crucifixion, or resurrection as decisive events, but insists that their true meaning lies not in their factual verification but in their existential impact on the believer. For Bultmann, mythological language such as demons, miracles, or cosmic battles cannot be accepted literally by the modern scientific mind, yet these symbols convey profound truths about human existence: guilt, estrangement, and the need for redemption. Thus, demythologization seeks to uncover the kerygma, the proclamation that confronts individuals with the demand for authentic decision before God.

Although Bultmann's aim was criticized for being reduced into a Heideggerian existentialism (Congdon, 2016). But Bultmann countered this criticism through noting that he did not favored science. Instead, he exposed how both myth and science can objectify God, turning divine action into a worldly causal force (Congdon, 2017). In this way, the Gospel's power is preserved, not reduced, since its truth is found in the existential encounter with Christ rather than in historical reconstruction (Bultmann, 1961).

### ***3.2 Existential Understanding of the New Testament***

Rudolf Bultmann places great importance on the ability of modern human beings to relate to the message of the New Testament. His central goal is to ensure that the proclamation of the Gospel remains meaningful for people shaped by contemporary scientific and technological thinking. This compels him to interpret Scripture in a manner relevant to today's era (Bultmann, 1961). In Bultmann's works, his emphasis on the mythological narratives of the Bible arises from the distinct scientific worldview of modernity. Humanity now interprets reality through categories of causality and empirical explanation, which renders biblical cosmology seemingly irrelevant. Bultmann recognized that "much of what the New Testament has to say is completely foreign to modern man, who thinks scientifically; and because of this, many men will not accept any of it, for they are convinced that it is exclusively mythological (Salm, 2019)." Bultmann himself described the biblical worldview as a "simple cosmology; a



three-storied universe with heaven above, hell below, and the earth in between,” populated by angels and demons who intervene in human affairs (Bartsch, 1972). For Bultmann, the scandal of the Gospel lies in the fact that these mythological depictions cannot be accepted as literal truth in the modern age. Instead, they must be interpreted existentially, as symbols of humanity’s condition of estrangement and need for redemption.

He argued that Christian preaching cannot expect modern individuals to accept a mythical worldview, since cosmologies are historically determined and shaped by compelling new facts—such as the discoveries of Copernicus or atomic theory—that render older views untenable. As Bultmann explains, “no man can adopt a view of the world by his own volition; it is already determined for him by his place in history (Bultmann, 1961). Thus, the task of theology is not to defend outdated cosmology but to uncover the existential truth of the Gospel that transcends scientific paradigms. Ultimately, Bultmann’s objective is to explore the basis of Christian freedom, which lies in faith in God as Creator. Through the kerygma, believers are called to authentic decision and to live in accordance with God’s will. Bultmann insisted that “God is above all the powers of history and national life (Richards, 2009),” and that true allegiance belongs to God alone. By listening to the Word and responding in faith, the modern person can experience genuine freedom and authenticity in existence.

#### **4. Conclusion**

According to Socrates, “An unexamined life is not worth living (Hutchinson, 1997).” This insight remains true, for life demands reflection and interpretation. To examine life is to engage in an existential quest, interpreting existence in terms of Dasein—the being who cares for its own existence (Heidegger, 1927/1972). Martin Heidegger describes Dasein as “being-thrown” into the world, thereby emphasizing the historicity of human existence. By being part of the world, man becomes aware of his finitude and possibilities.

Heidegger’s ontological hermeneutics influenced Rudolf Bultmann to conclude that humanity requires guidance in its existential quest for authentic life. Through phenomenological understanding, man becomes aware of his existence, actualizes possibilities, and confronts problems characterized by anxiety. Yet, as Bultmann notes, the words of Jesus speak directly to those burdened by anxiety, reminding them not to be consumed by self-mastery or ambition (Richards, 2009). In this way, the Gospel provides a liberating message that addresses the existential condition of modern humanity.

The pursuit of authentic existence lies at the heart of both Heidegger’s philosophy and Bultmann’s theology. Heidegger’s analysis of Dasein in *Being and Time* reveals that human beings are finite, historical, and confronted with the



inevitability of death (Heidegger, 1927/1972). Authentic existence arises when Dasein acknowledges its mortality and lives responsibly within its possibilities. However, Heidegger's framework remains philosophical, lacking a theological dimension. Bultmann appropriates Heidegger's existential categories but insists that authentic existence cannot be achieved through human effort alone; it requires an encounter with the Word of God. For Bultmann, demythologization is the hermeneutical method that translates biblical myth into existential truth, enabling modern individuals to hear the kerygma without rejecting it as pre-scientific. The resurrection, for example, is not merely a historical datum but the proclamation that confronts the believer with the demand for decision. Authentic existence, therefore, is realized when one responds in faith to God's call, transcending anxiety and false autonomy.

While Heidegger provides the philosophical groundwork for understanding existence, Bultmann extends this into theology, showing that authentic life is not simply self-realization, but freedom grounded in God's grace. In this synthesis, existential philosophy and Christian proclamation converge man attains authenticity not by mastering life but by surrendering to the divine Word that liberates him from anxiety and calls him into genuine freedom (Bultmann, 1961).

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