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Context for the Christ Event

FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, the Hebrews have believed that God chose them to resolve the vast chasm between good and evil and thus to redeem the human race and the entire created order. They have persisted in this endeavor through their millennial experience of migrations, dispersions, enslavements and attempted exterminations. During this varied experience they have consistently borrowed myths, beliefs and practices from co-existent societies and cultures. These “borrowings” have provided the context for their mission.

Because the Christ event occurred in this very setting, *Outlook's* “Context for the Christ Event” includes an array of documents that attempt to recover this background. These documents explore the wide spectrum of metaphors borrowed by Judaism from “foreign” sources and subsequently modified to define the Christ event itself.

For much of the twentieth century, the German theologian, Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976), represented the school of thought known as Neo-Orthodoxy. Neo-Orthodoxy regards such Christological events as virgin birth, miracles, crucifixion and resurrection as purely mythical rather than historical. For Neo-Orthodoxy these events did not and could never have occurred. Bultmann was therefore determined to “demythologize” the New Testament by interpreting it in terms of contemporary scientific presuppositions. Of course, this excluded all supernatural revelation and attempted to reduce the Christ event to the level of secular history. In this setting Jesus was simply an illiterate, itinerant Jewish peasant who imagined himself to be a philosopher. Paradoxically, however, these attempts actually converted history into myth!^{1, 2}

Over against these attempts, the purpose of *Outlook's* “Context for the Christ Event” is to show that Jesus Christ, as the human manifestation of YHWH, determined to adopt and adapt past myths and to explicitly convert them into history! It is important to understand this fundamental context in order to properly address the Christ event itself.

Endnotes

1. See Greg Gossett, "Rudolf Bultmann and the Theory of Demythologization," at www.ghg.net/jfox/WUMC/BULTMANN.htm.
2. See Jeffrey Carlson and Robert A. Ludwig, eds., *Jesus and Faith: A Conversation on the Work of John Dominic Crossan* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994).

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