

BUDDHISM AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUE. By Masao Abe. Edited by Steven Heine. In the Library of Philosophy & Religion series, general editor John Hick. Macmillan, London, 1995. ISBN 0 333 61197 7 (cloth)

MASAO ABE HAS published the first of a promised two-part sequel to his much admired *Zen and Western Thought* (1985). All of the eighteen collected essays have previously been published. Abe now has assembled these essays around three basic themes. Part one has to do with his Buddhist approach to interfaith dialogue. Part two brings together essays written on the theology of Paul Tillich. Part three deals with Buddhism in dialogue with Christian theologians such as Thomas Altizer (on kenosis), Keith Egan (on contemplation), Paul Knitter (on spirituality and liberation), and Langdon Gilkey (on Christology and creation). Also included is an address Abe gave to a group of Hasidic Jews and an essay on Buddhist ethics.

Abe's thinking on the problem of Buddhist ethics has been evolving for some time. The use of Madhyamika's two-truths theory as a way of defending Buddhism from the charge of philosophical nihilism is not novel. Abe's use of the two-truths theory to defend Buddhism against the charge of ethical quietism, however, is noteworthy. Overcoming attachment to samsara is wisdom (*prajna*). Overcoming attachment to nirvana is compassion (*karuna*). Therefore wisdom stands in need of perfection and finds its perfection by means of the ethical engagement of samsara. In arguing such, Abe not only defends Buddhism against its critics, he also offers a challenge to Buddhists to take the ethical implications of the Perfection of Wisdom tradition seriously. And in doing so, he also makes a worthwhile contribution to comparative religious ethics. Both Christianity and Buddhism provide the foundation for ethical action based on two different kinds of religious realization: eschatological hope and non-teleological emptiness.

The essays of the first section, on Buddhist approaches to interfaith dialogue, allow one to monitor the development of Abe's emerging theory of religious diversity. Against John Hick and others associated with the "pluralist" school, Abe places himself among those who do not think there is a common denominator uniting all religions into a transcendent unity. The unity of religions may be affirmed, however, based on a nontranscendent understanding of emptiness. Thus, there are two kinds of unity: a monistic unity based on the presupposition of a transcendent essence linking all religions and a nondualistic unity based on sunyata. In this regard, Abe is building on Cobb's view of the complementarity of religions. Unmentioned in any of these essays is Abe's ingenious use the principle of *gyakutaiō* (inverse correspon-

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dence) as it was developed in Nishida's final essay on the philosophy of religion. Abe appealed to this notion as the basis for a topology of religions in the Nishida Memorial Lecture of 1979. Religions such as early Buddhism and Zen realize the principle of inverse correspondence in a way different from religions such as Christianity and Pure Land Buddhism.

A question may be posed to Professor Abe in regard to his nondualistic model of religious unity. Abe's well known exposition of emptiness focuses on dualistic consciousness as the ultimate basis for the world's difficulties and highlights the nondualism of sunyata as the remedy. Implicit in Abe's doctrine of nondualistic emptiness is a hierarchical model of religious diversity. Zen occupies the top of the hierarchy to the extent that it succeeds thoroughly in overcoming dualism. Pure Land Buddhism's focus on faith in the Amida and Theravāda Buddhism's Arhant ideal do not measure up to the standards set by Zen. Christianity, to the extent that it places its faith in a transcendent God, cannot succeed in overcoming dualism. What is the relationship between the hierarchy of religions based on their ability to overcome dualism and the complementarity of religions based on the logic of nondualism?

JAMES L. FREDERICKS

CORRECTION

In the Spring issue of the journal (*Eastern Buddhist* 28,1), due to an oversight, a few misprints managed to find their way into Dr. J. W. de Jong's review of the BDK English Tripiṭaka volumes.

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| p. 155, line 2 of text | Nehan, <i>read</i> : Yehan |
| p. 156, line 2 infra | the reader it not, <i>read</i> : the reader is not |
| p. 157, line 11-12 infra | "The conductor of men" (調征丈夫), <i>read</i> : "The conductor of men" (調御丈夫) |
| p. 159, line 1 | lo-ch'a (落叉). Sanskrit, <i>read</i> : lo-ch'a (落叉), Sanskrit |

ADDITION

Also in the same issue, we failed to give due credit to John C. Maraldo for his skillful editing of technical portions of Ueda Shizuteru's article.