Paul O. INGRAM, *The Modern Buddhist-Christian Dialogue: Two Universalistic Religions in Transformation* (Studies in Comparative Religion, Vol. 2). Lewiston/Queenston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988. xvii + 441 pp. US$79.95. ISBN 0-88946-490-1.

This work by Paul INGRAM, associate professor of religion at the Pacific Lutheran University, might best be described as a series of ten conferences held to enlighten a general Christian audience on the nature and content of the Buddhist-Christian dialogue. As such it does not have to lay claim to originality but is free to rely rather heavily on some—mostly well-chosen—authorities, especially John COBB Jr., Wilfred Cantwell SMITH, and Alicia MATSUNAGA. As to form, the book shows the signs of its method of production by computer with a (concomitant?) lack of sufficient editing: a few nearly literal repetitions, a rather erratic use of diacritical marks, some unchecked slips of the tongue (as when the word "monasticism" is said to derive "from the German, *monadzein*, 'to live alone' " [sic!] p. 248). Fortunately, the contents are provocative enough to make one forget these peccadiloes. An overview of the chapters may show us that many of the burning topics of the Buddhist-Christian dialogue are indeed covered.

After an introductory chapter on "Dialogue as a Process of Creative Transformation," wherein the tone is set already by process philosophy, chapters 2 and 3 treat the general character of respectively the Christian and Buddhist historical attitudes toward other religious ways. The Christian way is characterized as dominated by the "extra ecclesiam nulla salus" tenet (including the recent "strenuous efforts . . . to escape the more negative and unacceptable conclusions of this doctrine," p. 43) while the Buddhist practice is seen under the sign of *upāya* or the "philosophy of assimilation." Guided by W. C. SMITH's distinction of faith and belief, chapter 4 recognizes both Christianity and Buddhism as paths of faith and investigates "how the generic nature of faith is specifically structured by Buddhist and Christian existence" (p. 123). Chapter 5 and 6 then treat religious practice (Faith as Practice) respectively in Buddhism and Christianity. Some interesting comparisons are made here but on the whole the two chapters run pretty much parallel without much inner connection. In chapters 7 to 9 three eminently important questions come under scrutiny: "Buddhist and Christian Paradigms of Selfhood" (7), "The Question of God" (8), and "Buddhist and Christian Universalism" (9). This last, somewhat cryptic, title covers in fact a description of "how and why Cobb believes the Christian Way can contribute to what he calls the 'fulfillment of the Buddhist Way' " (p. 350). In chapter 10, "Conclusion in Process," the author finally offers his personal synthetic view of the question.

As a reviewer, I naturally found a few flies in the ointment. Some of the chapters appear to be upholstered a bit with material whose relevance to the dialogue is not very apparent. So, for example, the treatment of modern ethical theories (pp. 219–229) in chapter 6 and the explanation of the difference in treatment of body and soul in the Bible and Greek thought (pp. 289–300) in chapter 7. The treatment of Buddhist meditation (pp. 188–196) and of

Christian monasticism and mysticism (pp. 246–253) is definitely not up to par. I also regret to find that the very "extrinsic" presentation of Christian salvation (pp. 148–154, 259, 408–410) does not show any sign of "creative transformation" by the dialogue with Buddhism (or with Greek-Orthodox Christianity for that matter). In chapter 5, I missed a treatment of the role of ethics in Buddhist practice, and I wonder who is finally going to "blast to high heaven" the myth of the equation of the Western idea of substance with the Indian *svabhāva* (p. 282). I finally have the impression that the author bends backward a bit too far when he judges the "fulfillment pattern" on the one hand as "thoroughly dialogical" in the case of the Buddhist *upāya* (p. 107) and, on the other hand, as "Ptolemaic" and as not yet recognizing the others "as different expressions of religious faith and praxis in their own right" (pp. 50–51) in the case of Christian theologians. Still, these gripes notwithstanding, I was sincere when I earlier called the book provocative. The author offers, indeed, much food for thought and I am grateful to him for making me reflect, for instance, on the exact part process theology is playing in the Buddhist-Christian dialogue. Would there be any feed-back on this point from the Buddhist side? And what can be meant precisely by the "transformation" which the dialogue is supposed to work in us? Does the author himself partly withdraw his bold affirmations: ". . . precisely because interreligious dialogue changes us, there are no guarantees we will or can or should remain labeled 'Christian' or 'Buddhist'" (p. 26; cf. p. 76)—when he further speaks of "Christians transforming themselves in an authentically Christian way through appropriating Buddhist insights, experiences, and practices" (p. 108)?

Let me add that I especially appreciated Ingram's balanced approach to the Buddhist no-self paradigm and the great attention he pays to Pure Land Buddhism. Wishing the book a wide public, I can only hope that a paperback edition will substantially reduce the steep price of the clothbound copy.

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