

Richard Henry DRUMMOND, *A Broader Vision: Perspectives on the Buddha and the Christ*. Virginia Beach, Virginia: A. R. E. Press, 1995. xx + 341 pages. \$16.95 paper, ISBN 0-87604-348-1.

RICHARD DRUMMOND'S *A Broader Vision* is a valuable addition to the growing number of "engaged" studies, studies that, as opposed to "neutral" or purely academic studies, approach religion from a dual perspective in which the outlook of one's own tradition is accompanied by a sympathetic study (minimally) or secondary allegiance (maximally) to a different tradition. The result may indeed be characterized as "a broader vision," although the modifiers "cross-referential" or "reciprocally illuminating" may equally well describe the effects of the dual perspective. The question then is, How far does the work under consideration evince these beneficial results? That is, How far is the author's vision genuinely "dual"? I believe that, in Drummond's case, the answer is: To quite a high degree.

In his preface Drummond tells us more about his background than most authors are wont to, explaining that he does so for the sake of intellectual honesty. Since, he says, an "objective" standpoint in these matters is neither possible nor fruitful, "I believe...that the issue is clarified if a writer acknowledges with specificity his or her own position of religious faith and consequent orientation" (p. xv). The back cover tells us that Drummond has for many years occupied the Chair of Comparative Religion at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary [Protestant], but more enlightening may be what the author himself writes: "I have been a student of Buddhism now for over forty years. I have been an adult participant in biblical and historical studies related to Christianity for over fifty years" (p. xii). The author's exposure to living Buddhism occurred mainly in Japan, where he "lived and worked for nearly eighteen years as both a field and educational missionary of the Presbyterian Church" (p. xiii). His familiarity with Japanese Buddhism is evident in this book, although so too is his deep knowledge of the oldest Pāli texts. Decisively important for the quality of the volume is the fact that the author is a theological "pro," and thus extraordinarily knowledgeable about Christian doctrine. The reason I find this important is that so many people in comparative studies (and also in interreligious dialogue, to which Drummond wants "to make some contribution" [p. xiv]) betray a rather limited knowledge of the Christian tradition. If a comparison is not out of order, I would say that all in all—and not surprisingly—the author shows a surer touch in matters Christian than Buddhist.

The author's theological position with regard to the "non-Christian" religions appears to be in line with that of many Catholic "inclusivist" theologians; he himself defines it as "Christocentric Universe, Inclusive Christology" (note 122). He does not hesitate to put Jesus and Śākyamuni on the same plane phenomenologically, but reserves for the work of Jesus the Christ an ontological (cosmological) priority. His stance is expressed most succinctly in the following words: "The faith-obedience of those in other historic religious traditions has not come into existence nor developed apart from the ongoing influences of the Christ event or of its Person" (p. 170). I agree with this stance insofar as it allows a positive evaluation of other religions based upon a conviction of the universality of salvation in Christ, but I hesitate to go along with his use of the term *preparatio evangelica* to specify the relationship of other religions to Christ's cosmic salvific activity (pp. 167, 178). I am too impressed by the truth of Lesslie NEWBIGIN's observation that, in R. Otto's words, the different religions turn on different axes. One does not truly understand any religion by seeing it as a preparation for Christianity; each religion must be understood on its own terms along the line of its own axis (1981).

The structure of the book is of classic simplicity, treating successively Gautama the Buddha (part 1), Jesus the Christ (part 2), and the Buddha and the Christ (part 3). Part 1 presents a very appreciative and admiring picture of the founder of Buddhism. This follows as a whole the traditional presentation and will, I believe, be quite acceptable to Buddhists. After a fine overview of the Indian civilization into which the Buddha was born, Drummond presents the life and the teaching of Śākyamuni. The element of the Buddha's life that gets the lion's share of attention is, fittingly, his enlightenment. Drummond's perceptive observation, "The nature of the event was such as to make personal experience...a primal element in the entire Buddhist tradition" (p. 21), is probably inspired by an implicit comparison with Christian problematics. So too is his less usual remark that "there is little, if any, indication of ongoing development in spiritual understanding or practice in the life of the Buddha" (p. 27).

Two points, both on page 19, caused question marks to arise in my mind. First, the people usually referred to as Śākyamuni's companions in the ascetic life are here called his disciples. Second, an unusual "Buddhist threefold structure" is mentioned, consisting of dharma (law, teaching), vinaya (discipline), and saṃgha (community) instead of Buddha, dharma, and saṃgha. But most debatable might be the author's categorical claim that the Buddha made no soteriological distinction between monks and householders, and that the monks served only as the "primary agents of missionary activity" (p. 29; cf. p. 184).

In his explanation of the Buddha's doctrine, Drummond, while not omitting the Four Holy Truths and Eightfold Path, devotes more attention than usual to the concept of dharma and its relationship with nirvāṇa. About nirvāṇa, which he calls "the goal of early Buddhist vision and effort, the Ultimate, the One" (p. 36), he makes two very significant remarks.

Differently from various perceptions of later Mahāyāna philosophy... the Buddha's worldview was essentially dualistic in the sense of affirmation of a radical religious distinction between the Ultimate and all else. (p. 36)

Nirvāna in the early texts seems morphologically correlate—in the sense of its cosmic reality and function—with the Kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus. (pp. 37-38)

The first statement I can only agree with, but the second needs the author's later explanation of Jesus's "Kingdom of God" to be understandable.

The stress on dharma is one point where the author's perspective is influenced by his experience with Japanese, especially Pure Land, Buddhism (as well as by the Christian doctrine of grace). He is aware that his view is not the generally accepted one, noting in his preface, "I assign a relatively greater significance to the role of the Dharma in the life and teaching of the Buddha than does Professor Nakamura" (p. xvi). For Drummond, dharma serves as the religious counterbalance to the great stress on self-effort and forms a transcendent "accomplice" on the path to liberation. The role of dharma in the teaching of the Buddha, he says, clearly suggests Śākyamuni's belief in and awareness of the presence in phenomenal existence of a force that "makes for righteousness" (p. 42); the Buddha's posture toward dharma was indeed that of worshipful honor and respect, the posture of one who lives "only under Dharma" (p. 40). Here again I tend to share the author's opinion. However, I was rather confused, I must confess, by the author's explanations of the relationship between nirvāṇa and dharma (cf. pp. 38-39, 232-40), a topic on which, surprisingly enough, I can recall no other explicit treatment. A further point of confusion was the author's repeated identification of karma and *pratītya samutpada* (p. 37 and passim, e.g., pp. 21, 26, 45).

For me it is part 2, "Jesus the Christ," that shows the author's true strength and constitutes the most original and valuable portion of the book. Drummond basically does two things. First, he launches a challenge to what he calls the "pedestrian reductionism" (p. 91) of much academic Bible scholarship and reinstates in a believable way those levels of the New Testament world that the "scientific enlightenment spirit" has tended to discount. Second, he discovers in Jesus's worldview profound commonalities with the teachings of the Buddha—commonalities that I have never seen pointed out elsewhere. The intimate connection between these two points is clear. The author's "anti-modernist" interpretation of the Gospel narratives is not simply the result of a conservative or postmodern approach but owes much to his reflections on Buddhism.

Drummond's basic contentions may be summarized as follows. Jesus's teaching and activity presuppose the existence of a "spiritual world" that influences the everyday world; belief in this world is the basic trait common to the teachings of both Jesus and Śākyamuni; spiritually gifted people (as Jesus himself undoubtedly was, to the highest degree) can come into contact with this world. Noting Edward Conze's claim that "both the Buddha and subsequent Buddhism...presume the existence of what we may call at this point a

spiritual world" (p. 70), he formulates his own conviction that the "perception and affirmation of the superlative significance of relationship with higher levels of reality in the cosmos are characteristic of the Hebraic religious experience" (p. 71).

With this as a background the author reevaluates "high Christology" (especially that of St. John) and the cosmic role of Christ, and also restores due weight to the miracle stories of the Gospel. But perhaps Buddhism has influenced his view that high Christology ("an unbroken continuum of relationship with the Father in his very nature as well as activity" [p. 85]) is backed by "high anthropology" (an "ontological continuity" with all humankind). "We thus have to do here with a grand concept of a relational continuum ranging from Father to Son to other children" (p. 87). In the same vein, he also stresses that "Jesus the Christ, like the Buddha, was a person of the deepest interiority" (p. 78).

Drummond detects in the New Testament (in Paul as well as Jesus) a belief in "cosmic compensation," a cosmic principle of causal connectedness whereby human actions bear fruits both physical and spiritual—a notion quite close to that of karma in Buddhism. "Perception of this cosmic principle-process, I would affirm at this point, plays as large a role in the worldview—and in the teaching—of Jesus as of Gautama" (p. 76). Although both traditions see this process as subordinating people to spiritual forces, the "Good News" is also basically the same: "The primary import of the ministry and teaching of both the Buddha and the Christ... was to proclaim the possibility of the liberation of human beings suffering in bondage to the effects of the karmic process" (p. 77).

Let me briefly indicate those items in which I sense at least the implicit "presence" of Buddhism in Drummond's presentation of Jesus's teaching. In his treatment of Jesus's doctrine on the Kingdom of God, Drummond stresses that Jesus's "primary emphasis was upon the present power of God at work in the world" (p. 116) rather than upon the eschatological future, and that there are moments when Jesus "moved out of all limitations of eschatological dimensions of thought into awareness of the eternal present with God" (p. 121). Having shown that in the Buddha's religious quest "the profoundest ethical implications are involved at every step of the way" (p. 46), he stresses that "the concept of the Kingdom of God is impregnated from beginning to end with ethical qualities" (p. 122).

Another aspect of Jesus's teaching that Drummond's study of Buddhism may have helped him to appreciate (although this time by way of contrast) is the oft-repeated theme of "the divine quest of the lost": Drummond comments that "this thesis of the Father...as taking initiative, as 'moving out', to seek and to save that which is lost, is an aspect of Jesus's teaching which we do not find comparably in Gautama's" (p. 128). Finally, interreligious concerns appear to have influenced the author's view that the main thrust of the New Testament message is the "openness" of the Kingdom (i.e., its availability to those who are not disciples or members of the "church" [pp. 145–48, 223–31]—an assertion unwarranted, I fear, in its categorical form). In the section "The Work of Jesus the Christ," Drummond strives to make under-

standable Jesus's "consciously chosen vicarious-redemptive role" (p. 150), an element not found in the Buddha's message of liberation.

After part 2, with its important message for contemporary Christianity and its solid understanding of the dialogue with Buddhism, I must confess that I found part 3, "The Buddha and the Christ," to be something of a letdown. The five sections deal with: 1) the nature of humanity; 2) women and children; 3) monks and the church; 4) the world and the cosmos; 5) the spirit of sacrifice and the mystery of the cross. It is only sections 1 and 4, however, that offer any new comparative insights. Sections 2 and 5 limit themselves to a consideration of two admittedly beautiful character traits of Jesus: his attention to children and his sacrifice of self (Drummond's theology of the cross). Section 3 elaborates on a theme presented earlier.

Section 1, "The Anthropological Understanding," convincingly presents the Buddhist *anātman* and the New Testament "imagery of the death of self" as common calls for a fundamental transformation away from the ego-centered self. I fear, though, that many Buddhists might balk when the author sees this commonality not only in the *terminus a quo* but also in the *terminus ad quem*, and defines the latter as follows: "Both Jesus and Gautama perceived this anticipated transformation as leading to some kind of eternal life, as participation in new modes of life that begin in this world and continue beyond physical death" (p. 183).

Let me end by quoting two strong affirmations of commonality found in section 4:

[In part 2] we were left... with the strongest of affirmations of a religious kind from both these individuals [Gautama and Jesus] to the effect that liberation or gospel or opportunity is the final word that they wish to offer the whole of humanity [p. 233]. We may say, therefore, that the morphology of religious experience, as of the understanding of the nature of human life, is surprisingly similar in both traditions [p. 238].

*A Broader Vision* is highly recommended reading, not only for people interested in the Buddhist-Christian dialogue but also for Christians tempted by "modernism" (and who is not?).

#### REFERENCE

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- 1981 The Gospel among the religions. In *Faith Meets Faith*, G. H. Anderson and T. F. Stransky, eds. New York: Paulist Press.

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