

THE JOURNAL

OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF

BUDDHIST STUDIES

CO-EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Gregory Schopen
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana, USA

Roger Jackson
Fairfield University
Fairfield, Connecticut, USA

EDITORS

Peter N. Gregory
University of Illinois
Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, USA

Ernst Steinkellner
University of Vienna
Wien, Austria

Alexander W. Macdonald
Université de Paris X
Nanterre, France

Jikidō Takasaki
University of Tokyo
Tokyo, Japan

Bardwell Smith
Carleton College
Northfield, Minnesota, USA

Robert Thurman
Amherst College
Amherst, Massachusetts, USA

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Bruce Cameron Hall
College of William and Mary
Williamsburg, Virginia, USA

Volume 9

1986

Number 2

CONTENTS

I. ARTICLES

1. Signs, Memory and History: A Tantric Buddhist
Theory of Scriptural Transmission, *by Janet Gyatso* 7
2. Symbolism of the Buddhist *Stüpa*, *by Gérard Fussman* 37
3. The Identification of dGa' rab rdo rje,
by A. W. Hanson-Barber 55
4. An Approach to Dōgen's Dialectical Thinking
and Method of Instantiation, *by Shohei Ichimura* 65
5. A Report on Religious Activity in Central Tibet,
October, 1985, *by Donald S. Lopez, Jr. and
Cyrus Stearns* 101
6. A Study of the Earliest *Garbha Vidhi* of the
Shingon Sect, *by Dale Allen Todaro* 109
7. On the Sources for Sa skya Paṇḍita's Notes on the
"bSam yas Debate," *by Leonard W. J. van der Kuip* 147

II. BOOK REVIEWS

1. *The Bodymind Experience in Japanese Buddhism:
A Phenomenological Study of Kūkai and Dōgen*,
by D. Shaner
(William Waldron) 155
2. *A Catalogue of the sTog Palace Kanjur*,
by Tadeusz Skorupski
(Bruce Cameron Hall) 156

3.	<i>Early Buddhism and Christianity: A Comparative Study of the Founders' Authority, the Community, and the Discipline</i> , by Chai-Shin Yu (Vijitha Rajapakse)	162
4.	<i>The Heart of Buddhist Philosophy: Dinnāga and Dharmakīrti</i> , by Amar Singh (Richard Hayes)	166
5.	<i>Shōbōgenzō: Zen Essays by Dōgen</i> , translated by Thomas Cleary (Steven Heine)	173
6.	<i>Studies in Ch'an and Hua-yen</i> , edited by Robert M. Gimello and Peter N. Gregory (John Jorgensen)	177
7.	<i>The Tantric Distinction</i> , by Jeffrey Hopkins (Bruce Burrill) Jeffrey Hopkins Replies Bruce Burrill Replies	181
	NOTES AND NEWS [2 items]	189
	LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS	191

Early Buddhism and Christianity: A Comparative Study of the Founders' Authority, the Community, and the Discipline, by Chai-Shin Yu. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981. xv + 241 pp.

The comparative study of Buddhism and Christianity presented in this work revolves around some considerations that are deemed to be of special relevance in understanding their character as "two of the greatest and most influential of world religions." Doctrinal matters have been the major focus of many a previous endeavour in the scholarly juxtaposition of Buddhism and Christianity. This study, which seeks instead to examine the authority of the founders, their respective communities and the discipline enforced within them during their early formative stages (covering, that is, a period of about a century from the demise of the Buddha and Christ) is in some ways novel in scope, and offers much that should interest Buddhist scholars and comparativists alike. Indeed, it is Yu's belief that *Early Buddhism and Christianity* may not only contribute to a better understanding of the three specific topics examined, but that in so doing it will also help explain the continuing vitality and success of the two religions.

The main contents of this book are arranged in three parts: the first two parts are separate examinations of early Buddhism and early Christianity in relation to the study's focal concerns; the third part is a brief retrospective review of the similarities and differences exhibited by the two traditions. Yu displays here a good grasp of the positions taken by these very different religions, clarifying their basic assumptions and emphases with the help of the classic nomenclatures adopted in their respective scriptural writings (especially those rooted in the Buddhist *Vinaya* texts in the original Pāli and the later Chinese redactions on the one hand, and the Greek versions of the Christian Gospels and Epistles on the other). His comparison itself is rather brief, and, as we shall see shortly, it has other limitations as well. Still, considered overall, the scholarly resources brought to bear on this complex inquiry (which include a notable use of modern Japanese expository literature on Buddhism) are rather impressive. Its conclusions might indeed help students of Buddhism in particular recognize how their tradition stands *vis à vis* another tradition as religion rather than as mere philosophy.

The body of Yu's investigation yields a rich array of clarifications and insights regarding early Buddhism, early Christianity and their relationship to one another as viewed from a comparativist perspective. Buddhism, significantly, receives most attention (pp. 1-127), and the discussion here could even be viewed

as a compressed exposition of the Buddha's authority and role within the *saṃgha* and the disciplinary structures that sustained the early Buddhist community. Some of the points made at this level are noteworthy. The Buddha's authority is traced to his realization and the proclamation of the *Dhamma*; and he is represented as having a virtual "ruling" function within the *saṃgha*. Though the Buddha was thus the "king of the *Dhamma*," his authority, it is argued, was never personal or absolute; for most practical purposes religious discipline (*sīla-vinaya*) was the basis of the unity and the integrity of the *saṃgha*. Indeed, Yu rightly underscores the importance of the latter factor, and dwells at some length on the character and scope of this discipline, which in sustaining the *saṃgha* has finally helped to preserve and diffuse the Buddha's *Dhamma*. *Sīla* is identified as the ethics of Buddhist culture, *vinaya* the mores of communal living elaborated as an explicit body of rules (*pāṭimokkha*) encompassing prescriptions and prohibitions. It is interesting to observe that democratic values—equality, individual liberty and decision making procedures through voting—were upheld within the salvation-oriented society of monks and nuns; and Yu makes several references to places in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* where these admirable characteristics come to light (pp. 78, 80, 85). Though doctrinal matters receive only "secondary consideration" here, Yu has on occasion insightfully highlighted the way in which doctrine impinged on communal life: the Buddhist stress on the "Middle Path," for example, was in his view a basis for avoiding partisanship and promoting cooperation. All in all, the Buddha, *Dhamma* and *saṃgha* emerge as interrelated cardinal influences that together shaped Buddhism into a religion and finally made it a belief system of world scope.

With a shift in focus to early Christianity, the basic emphases of the book change. Jesus proclaimed himself as God incarnate in fulfillment of scriptural prophecies; and his authority, Yu points out, was the ultimate mandate for the existence of the Christian Church. Though Jesus' immediate disciples were witness to his miracles and the resurrection, his messianic mission and authority as Christ had to be accepted on faith, not reason. And the Christian ecclesial community in turn is represented as a response to God's saving act through Christ: Paul, it is observed, indeed viewed the Church as the "Body of Christ" (p. 171). Christian unity was finally sustained by a common recognition of Christ as Savior; and since this recognition was deemed to be a transforming experience, Yu sees it as a basis of moral discipline within Christianity. Still, drawing attention especially to the Gospel of St. Matthew and Paul's Epistles, he has rightly noted that

Christianity too affords scripturally elaborated norms of conduct. The concern for communal discipline evident in early Christianity sometimes parallels Buddhism's stress on *sīla-vinaya*, but there are differences as well, and these together with other, larger issues that arise in comparing the two faiths are addressed in the third and concluding part of the book.

Here, Yu identifies Buddhism and Christianity as "two great missionary world religions, taking their origin from two of the greatest figures in world history, with many parallel ideas of ethics, communitarian structure and life style, ideas that manifest striking similarities in secondary characteristics, although in the primary ones they would appear to be vastly different" (p. 195). Some of the more prominent similarities and differences that are brought to light in the course of the comparison presented at this level are noteworthy. As regards the founders' authority, the two religions are held to be similar in that both the Buddha and Christ were "spiritual kings" who led communities of disciples and proclaimed "saving" messages that later assumed the status of universal religions. These communities in turn played equally crucial roles in preserving and diffusing the respective messages of their founders; and they were, moreover, held together by disciplinary rules that reflected the soteriological orientation so much in evidence in both early Buddhism and early Christianity. However, the differences that separate these two religions, according to Yu, are equally, if not more, striking. The authority ascribed to the Buddha and Christ had different roots: the authority of the former stemmed from the timeless *Dhamma* which he only realized and proclaimed, while that of the latter is traceable to the believer's faith in him as the Son of God. The Buddhist *saṃgha* was mainly united through the *dhamma-vinaya*, with the Buddha playing the role of omniscient guide and preceptor; the Christian Church, in contrast, viewed Christ as the ground of its unity. Finally, with respect to discipline itself, the Buddhist *saṃgha*, as a monastic community, was organized (and indeed functioned) on the basis of a well elaborated code encompassing prescriptions, prohibitions and procedures for enforcing discipline and settling disputes. Little of this, strictly speaking, is paralleled in early Christianity, where discipline, finally, had its *fons et origo* in the faith-oriented commitment to God in Christ and continuing guidance through the Holy Spirit.

This book as a whole can be said to further Buddhist-Christian dialogue, and, as already indicated, its discussions also serve to illuminate certain issues that are important for the understanding of Buddhism as a religion. However, a critical reader is likely

to detect some deficiencies (both methodological and otherwise) in *Early Buddhism and Christianity*. For one thing, insights stemming from the behavioral sciences could have been usefully applied to clarify the organizational features of the religious communities that developed under the inspiration of these two religions. Some aspects of their discipline (especially the prohibitions) appear to invite psychological comment, while the procedures for conflict resolution laid down in the Buddhist *vinaya* perhaps deserve closer scrutiny because of the democratic spirit that they tend to manifest. There also appears to be a shortcoming in Yu's treatment of Christianity. He fails to come to grips in a serious way with the trinitarian view of God, though this doctrine is important to an understanding of the spiritual underpinnings of the early Church. His actual comparison, on the other hand, is rather brief and overly compressed, and the criss-crossing convergences and divergences that tend to be brought to light at this level are sometimes not carefully sorted out. Indeed, on occasion, the differentiations are drawn on the basis of considerations that hardly could be called edifying—the Buddha and the *saṃgha*, for example, are represented as *not* partaking of the divine, and *nirvāṇa* is depicted as a goal that could be *contrasted* with heaven. Naive or rather awkward judgements of this nature might perhaps have been avoided through a deeper awareness of the distinction between the “homologues” and the “analogues” that come to the fore in juxtaposing religions (Cf. Gustav Mensching, *Structures and Patterns of Religion*, 1978). In any event, there is one less overt (yet interesting) area of contact between Buddhism and Christianity that is largely overlooked here, faith: though it was certainly not as crucial to Buddhism as it was to Christianity, still, some dimension of faith might have entered into the disciples' attitude towards the Buddha, and its nature no doubt deserves some probing. It would be well to remark in conclusion, however, that these various shortcomings do not seriously undermine the value of Yu's inquiry, which, to repeat, has much to offer to the student of Buddhism, the comparativist and all those who seek to further Buddhist-Christian dialogue.

Vijitha Rajapakse