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In "Here and There," Claudel goes to Shizuoka, to the Rinzaïji Temple. "Time is measured there among the leaves, in front of the golden Buddha, by the burning of a small candle, and, in the depths of this ravine, by the flow of a triple fountain." He seems moved, under the spell of the place and its symbols, but then veers into a philosophical untangling of "a principle of existence . . . and its precarious expression." As he observes worshipers before three thousand golden Kannons that he refers to as "divine rubbish," he complains that "their blinded eyes refused to recognize unconditional being," by which he seems to mean something total yet encompassing an awareness of their own particular presence. This confusion between the seamless whole of "unconditional being" and its distinctive parts is the point at which Buddha, Claudel suggests, developed and perfected the "pagan blasphemy" of Nothingness. He seems to equate the Buddhist concept of Nothingness with "garulous delirium" and the desire for detachment with "the ultimate Satanic mystery, the silence of the creature retrenched in a total refusal, the incestuous quietude of the soul seated on its own essential difference."

Here and there, then and now, the challenge of holding awareness of more than one spiritual tradition requires an extra measure of tolerance and understanding, not to mention an expansive intellect. As an *immortel* of the Académie Française, Claudel possessed all of these, and yet he still found it difficult, or impossible, to fully accept another's spiritual practice. There is something comforting in this for us mere mortals.

Readers will be grateful for James Lawler's introduction and helpful chronology, which go well beyond the concerns of a linguist in orienting the reader to this unusual text. But most of all, we owe a debt of gratitude to the graciously invisible translator who guides us through mountains and forests, along winding paths, and in and out of mysterious temples. Claudel's remarkable life was always a quest to know the unknowable. In *Knowing the East*, we now have a chance to map an important aspect of his long journey.

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TRANSCENDENCE AND VIOLENCE: THE ENCOUNTER OF
BUDDHIST, CHRISTIAN, AND PRIMAL TRADITIONS. *By John D'Arcy
May.* New York: Continuum, 2003. 225 + xi pp.

In popular media, religion appears as a dangerous social phenomenon with explosive potential. The investigation of transcendence as a source of violence is particularly timely in light of America's war on terrorism targeting extremist Islam. However, this negative dimension of religion is nothing new. Over the course of history, hostility

and killing are intimately connected with religious divisions. The irony of religious violence as a betrayal of religious ethical ideals is both obvious and inescapable.

Approaching this hot topic from the perspective of religious imperialism, John D'Arcy May examines violence perpetrated by the Christian and Buddhist traditions against indigenous religions. His investigation covers damaging evidence against these two universalizing traditions using geographically specific case studies in Asia and the Pacific Rim. Situating Christianity and Buddhism in parallel as religions of transcendence, he compares how indigenous localized religions were overpowered by expansionist universalizing religions, although not eradicated. Into his historical narrative, he weaves his personal encounters with otherness growing up in Australia while virtually oblivious to the oppression of Aboriginals by white settlers, and as a Roman Catholic doing ecumenical work in Papua New Guinea for four years.

May opens the book with bold admission of the failures of European Christianity, evidenced in anti-Judaism and Holocaust genocide, and Theravada Buddhism's violent involvement in Sri Lanka's civil conflict between Sinhalese nationalists and Hindu Tamils. The reader is led to expect elaboration on the moral failings of Christianity, and this proves true; however, May's examination of the Buddhism's expansion and endorsement of violence tempers the tendency to single out Christianity as uniquely imperialist. He suggests that transcendence itself can cause hierarchy and oppression.

Part I of the book focuses on Christianity and violence. Chapter 1 studies how European Protestant and Catholic settlers to Australia treated the Aboriginal peoples. The story is grim. Using a psychoanalytic framework, May interprets the European vilification of Aboriginals as stemming from the repression of the primal other, and the repression of bio-cosmic religion in favor of transcendence. Constructively, he proposes that Aboriginal peoples can offer theological insights about the ontology of sacred space. Christians should not only seek reconciliation in society, but also consider new perspectives on the sacred in nature drawn from the dreaming of Aboriginal religious lore.

In chapter 2, May deals with colonization in the Melanesian Islands of the Pacific Ocean, concentrating on Papua New Guinea. In the indigenous religions of Melanesia, the prosperous community is the measure of religious rectitude, while misfortune is explained by the breaking of taboos and the revenge of enemies or evil spirits. After European colonization, "cargo cults" arose among the islands that promised abundant material goods possessed by European settlers by means of religious rituals and magic. Surprisingly, May points out the positive impulses at the root of these cargo cults that are typically viewed as detrimental and even outlawed outright by local governments for their harmful social impact. At bottom, he argues, cargo cults reflect a positive religious aspiration for wholeness and healing in this life that is a counterpoint to the spiritualization of salvation by European Christianity.

May tries to avoid idealizing these primal cultures and their religious insights; nevertheless, he finds them instructive for Christian theology. Native religions in both Australia and Papua New Guinea offer models of immanence that emphasize the religious value of nature and just relationships. It should be mentioned that

there is some nuance to this conclusion. For instance, Melanesian religion is portrayed as less exemplary than Australian aboriginal religion. But May's main point is that violence on a global scale is validated by Christian notions of transcendence that deny the material aspirations of the indigenous community, and promote a superiority that wreaks violence among indigenous peoples. Hopefully, intercultural theology will allow Christians to appreciate the Aboriginal respect for sacred geography and the Melanesian quest for the flourishing of one's local community.

Christianity and Buddhism are treated in parallel as expansionist religions with traditions of transcendence. Hence, part II of the book deals with the entry of Buddhism into Japan and Thailand. Chapter 3 describes how Buddhism entered Japan from China and Korea without armed colonization, unlike the advent of Christianity, and assimilated indigenous Shinto practices. It is striking that rather than serve a universalizing function beyond Japan's borders, Zen Buddhism ended up justifying devotion to the land of Japan, its people, and its emperor. May considers it tragic that Zen bolstered Japanese imperialism up until its defeat in World War II, and he explores how even philosophers of the respected Kyoto school subscribed to cultural nationalism. He soberly notes that at present, Japanese Buddhism has failed to respond critically and morally to the detrimental impact of economic success, environmental destruction, and regionalism.

Chapter 4 deals with Thailand, where Theravada Buddhism achieved symbiosis with Thai village spirit cults. Buddhism offered transcendence in nirvana while localized religion emphasized immanence through ritual practices to assist daily life. Politically, Theravada Buddhism presents a hierarchy of spiritual power that legitimates the royal power of the Thai monarchy as patron of the *sangha*. Nevertheless, May finds a glimmer of hope in twentieth-century "dhammic" socialism, formulated by Bhikkhu Buddhadasa and others, that promotes meditation as a basis for moral awareness and social change. Small groups of "development monks" advocate principles of Buddhist economics, including ecological responsibility and economic improvement, yet it remains to be seen whether socially engaged Buddhism will have a lasting impact on Thai society in general. Compared to Japanese Buddhism, certain leaders within the Thai *sangha* are more effective critically in responding to social violence.

Buddhism is less overtly violent than Christianity in its incursion into the territory of primal religions, but it is no more able to resist nationalism and its violent effects. However, the symmetry between parts I and II of the book is troubling. Historically, Christianity's entry into the Pacific was vastly different in its economic, racial, and political circumstances, and it was far bloodier, yet these differences between Buddhist and Christian violence toward other religions are not much explored. Buddhism indeed engulfed local religions, but such domination of one religion by another is not the same kind of violence as the subjugation of the indigenous peoples of the Pacific by European Christians. Another incongruity is that the theme of learning from the primal other, accentuated in part I, is absent in part II. One reason is may be that Buddhism partially assimilated indigenous religions, thus, it does not need to learn from them at present. But I find this explanation unlikely

given the author's ethical criticism of Buddhism in both countries. All in all, the four case studies (Australia, Melanesia, Japan, Thailand) can stand separately and much more comparative reflection by the author is needed to hold them together and analyze their interrelationships.

Part III deals with issues raised by the case studies at an abstract level. While the preceding chapters are historical, the last two chapters are philosophical and theological. Chapter 5 is ambitious to say the least. It contains a survey of spatiality and temporality in Western philosophy, Buddhist thought, and primal religions, followed by critical remarks on the dualistic and supersessionist tendencies of Christology. Then the author briefly contrasts Christian and Buddhist notions of transcendence and immanence in a cryptic passage only four pages long. Next, four strategies of encounter with the other are rapidly described: repression, ritualization, absorption, and institutionalization. The chapter ends with generalizations about world-transcending religions (Christianity and Buddhism) versus life-related traditions (primal religions) with evident admiration for the latter as more promising for peace among religions and the celebration of life through emphasis on sacred space and community.

Chapter 6 asks what can be learned from the failures of encounter among religions in the Pacific. At this point, May criticizes the frequent ethnocentrism of primal traditions as a hindrance to dialogue, which is an important observation, given that his emphasis thus far has been to criticize the absolutist position of religions that make universal claims. His verdict is that all of the traditions discussed could use improvement in encountering the other. To point the way forward, he introduces the term "*analogia relationis*" to refer to the ethical standard of charity toward the stranger, developed using the relational philosophy of Jewish thinker Emmanuel Levinas. The analogy he draws lies between the encounter of self and other, and the encounter between religions. May argues that the way to judge whether a given tradition is adequately engaged in the task of symbolizing the sacred is to assess whether it shows mutual respect for others and disavows violence. As a requirement for dialogue, a religion must frankly acknowledge failure to relate peacefully. The chapter ends with a whirlwind tour of the flaws in Christology (dualist Chalcedonian doctrine and absolutism) and Buddhology (hierarchy and accommodation to state power). Both Buddhism and Christianity are in crisis, according to May, and require major intellectual reorientation that responds to their expansion and endorsement of violence.

The conclusion reiterates the need for affirming human rootedness in nature and the sacred quality of ordinary experience, exemplified by primal religions. For Christians, May proposes that emphasis on eschatology can provide a transcendence-in-immanence that embraces nature and community along with hope for liberation and a critical perspective on social and economic forces. He concludes by defining a global ethos applicable to all religions that centers on three requirements: relinquishing superiority, practicing hospitality, and ending violence.

Looking at the book as a whole, it takes on exciting current issues and offers fascinating case studies that are instructive for a global Christian theology. It is unfor-

fortunate that the three parts of the book are not well integrated, and the short chapters place the burden on the reader to bring coherence. The complex theoretical questions raised are not dealt with in enough depth to satisfy, and the two major strands of inquiry seem almost independent of one another, namely (1) what parallels exist between Christianity and Buddhism involving transcendence and violence, and (2) how can indigenous primal religions instruct universalizing religions? The Buddhist-Christian comparisons are frustrating in their use of the overworked and abstract dichotomy between transcendence and immanence. Moreover, the praise of primal regard for sacred space, nature, and this-worldly affairs neglects resources in the Christian or Buddhist traditions that might provide precedent for such appreciation. On the other hand, it is plausible that primal traditions have something to teach, and that aggressive universalizing religions share formal features and flaws.

This book is recommended for scholars and graduate students, especially those interested in violence against primal religions, the inculturation process of a foreign religion, and theological directives for postcolonial religious encounter.

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MARTIN LUTHER AND BUDDHISM: THE AESTHETICS OF SUFFERING. *By Paul S. Chung.* Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002. 434 pp.

As a member of the Lutheran community (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America), I am struck by the fact that Lutheran theologians—referred to as “teaching theologians” when employed by Lutheran seminaries—seem little interested in religious pluralism in general and interreligious dialogue in particular. There are important exceptions, of course, one being Donald Luck of Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Ohio. And the most intense and coherent dialogue between Christians and Muslims now taking place in the United States is located at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. But by and large, Lutheran theology seems unengaged with the realities of religious pluralism. Rather than dialogue, “missionology” is the focus of most Lutheran theological encounter with the world religions, which means that most Lutheran conversation with religious pluralism is best characterized as monologue.

It’s different for most Lutherans sitting in the pews of local congregations. Most lay persons understand that they must live their faith contextualized by their religiously plural neighborhoods. Lutheran laity are interested the religious practices and worldviews of their neighbors because they are in contact with their neighbors everyday. They desire to meet and know the religious “other” not as “other,” but as fellow human beings seeking to live in community. My distinct impression, gained