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CHRISTIAN-BUDDHIST DIALOGUE IN THE WRITINGS OF LYNN A. DE SILVA

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By an analysis and evaluation of Lynn A. de Silva's dialogue with Sri Lankan Buddhism, this dissertation studies the theological implications of inter-religious dialogue that call for resolution from the Christian standpoint, the Christian self-understanding in religiously plural context, and the essentials of authentic inter-religious dialogue.

Chap. 1 surveys the historical factors which heightened the encounter between the two religions and describes the background from which De Silva's theology emerged. Developments in the debate on inter-religious dialogue in missionary conferences in Asia and in the World Council of Churches reveal the confrontation between Asian and European theologies. It is shown that De Silva's dialogical concerns arose out of existential contact with Sri Lankan Buddhism, and that the resurgence of Buddhism and the transition in Christian missionary attitudes led to a Sri Lankan expression of Christianity.

Chap. 2 describes De Silva's holistic dialogical approach in contrast to theoretical Western approaches. The basic ingredients essential to authentic dialogue and its objectives, as spelled out by De Silva, are noted. In his appraisal of the Buddhist approach to dialogue, dialogical exchanges with Buddhist thought leaders, and use of Buddhist terms, a practised theology of dialogue emerges.

Chap. 3 describes the translational nature of De Silva's dialogical theology. The process of conveying concepts from one religious context to another is traced in his use of *Tilakkhana* (the three signata of Buddhism)

as a conceptual framework in the development of: (1) a Christian-Buddhist estimate of man—the relation between *anattā* (non-self) and the Christian teaching about the spirit; (2) an inclusivist Christology—Christ as *Dharma-Logos*, and his salvific role in the religions; and (3) *anattā* and the indispensability of God.

Chap. 4 evaluates De Silva's treatment of Christianity and Buddhism as complementary systems and sifts out that which is theologically decisive for authentic inter-faith dialogue. It deals with the Buddhist response to De Silva and assesses his dialectical approach. It is shown that the salvific status accorded to other religions is crucial to Asian Christian self-understanding on the questions of church and mission.