

# Society for Buddhist- Christian Studies



Vol. 49

Spring 2012

## *News of the Society*

### **2011 SBCS Annual Meeting**

**American Academy of Religion  
(AAR)**

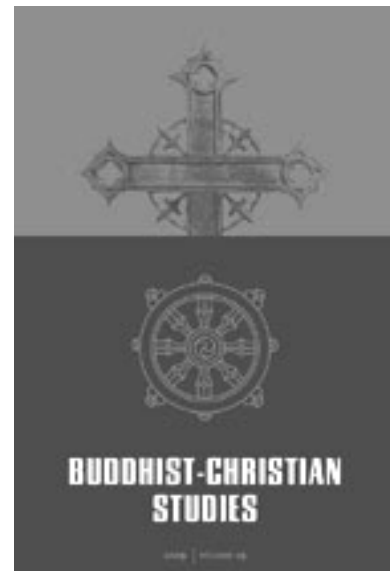
**November 19-22, 2011**

**San Francisco, California, USA**

### **New Editorial, Governing Board, and Committee Appointments**

The SBCS is one of 32 scholarly societies that have been formally recognized by the American Academy of Religion as a “Related Scholarly Organization.” The pattern for many years has been for the SBCS to hold its annual meeting in conjunction with the annual meeting of the AAR. On the Friday before the AAR’s annual meeting begins, the board meets in the morning and early afternoon, followed by an AAR-advertised session late that afternoon and then a field trip that evening. On Saturday, another paper session or panel is followed by the annual members meeting. At the Friday board meeting and the Saturday members meeting the following appointments were either approved or announced (for those filled by the board between annual meetings):

Wakoh Shannon Hickey (Alfred University) is the new Buddhist editor for *Buddhist-Christian Studies*.



Grace Burford (Prescott College) whose four-year term on the board ended with this annual meeting, will be replaced by David Gardiner (Colorado College).

Alice Keefe (University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point) will be serving as vice-president for two years and then as president for the next two years.

Abraham Velez de Cea (Eastern Kentucky University) and Mary Jeanne Larrabee (DePaul University) will be serving on the Steng book award committee.

The graduate award committee was made a standing committee of the board. Glenn Willis (Boston Collge) was appointed chairperson, and thus will be an ex officio member of the board. Former chairperson Karen Enriquez, who is now faculty at Xavier College, will remain on the committee as co-chair.

The society is very grateful for the leadership of Miriam Levering as vice-president and then president for the past four years, and for Grace Burford's contributions as a member of the board.

### Friday Afternoon and Saturday Morning Sessions

Friday afternoon's 4:00-6:30 session titled "Constructing Buddhist Identities in the West" was standing room only. Terry Muck, then vice-president, presided. Sociologist James Coleman (California Polytechnic State University) led off with "Who Is a Buddhist? The Problem of Identity in Western Buddhism." He noted that, while religious affiliation surveys tend to assume a person has only one religious identity, this is often not the case for western Buddhist practitioners. This leads to widely varying statistics on the number of Buddhists in the West. Jan Willis (Wesleyan University) in her presentation, "Some African Americans are Buddhists, Too," noted that the Buddha's confrontation of *varna*-based racial prejudice has impressed African Americans. Two factors that could play into the small number of racially diverse sanghas are "two Buddhisms" approaches to immigrant/convert "gaps" and the lack of attention often given to the western Buddhist traditions that are more racially diverse, like Soka Gakkai. The presentation of David Gilner, director of Hebrew Union College's libraries, was titled "Jewish and Buddhist." He noted that if one sets out to emphasize, within Judaism, the importance of *tikkun olan* (healing the earth), one way to begin is to see the aim of Torah as being *tikkun olan*. In this way both Buddhist and Jewish practice can be seen as fundamental to effectuating *tikkun olan*. Paul Knitter (Union Theological Seminary), in his presentation titled "Christian and Buddhist," traced the development of his own dual religious identity. He compared the approach to nonduality expressed within the Madyamika Buddhist form-emptiness

feedback loop with the approach to nonduality expressed within the Chalcedonian Christian human-divine feedback loop.

On Saturday morning SBCS then-president Miriam Levering presided at the well-attended session from 9:00 to 11:30. The topic was "Christian Readings of Buddhist Texts." Catherine Cornille (Boston College), editor of the Christian Commentaries on Non-Christian Sacred Texts series, gave the first presentation, titled "Reading the Religious Other." She discussed the origin and nature of the series, and gave examples of the methodologies used in various volumes they had published. Francis X. Clooney (Harvard University) presented "Reading Inter-religiously as a Theologically Necessary Act." Insisting that "reading well has a lot of common factors whether or not a text is from one's own or another tradition," he noted that "saying you read both the same doesn't mean you put them on same doctrinal level . . . We defer the apologetics not just to be polite, but because there are many other things to do first." Leo Lefebure (Georgetown University) spoke about "Reading the Dhammapada" in light of his work with Peter Feldmeier in writing "The Path of Wisdom: A Christian Commentary on the Dhammapada," published within the Christian Commentaries on Non-Christian Sacred Texts series. The volume was the winner of this year's Frederick J. Streng book award, which was presented by Amos Yong (Regent University). Lefebure pointed out that Biblical wisdom literature and the Dhammapada both insist that how we view the world largely shapes our happiness or unhappiness, and that both describe "decidedly unskillful and skillful ways to live."

Between the Saturday morning session and the members meeting that followed Karen Enriquez presented the graduate student award to Keongil Jung, a student of Paul Knitter's at Columbia University-Union Theological Seminary. He gave a brief synopsis of his award-winning paper, "A Buddhist-Christian Story of Peace and Justice."



### Field Trip

SBCS Board member Ven.Yifa and Abbess Ven. Jue Lin welcomed us to Fo Guang Shan's Sam Bao Temple, nearby. We enjoyed touring the temple and learning about Fo Guang Shan's work in San Francisco, Taiwan and mainland China, and in many other places globally. Our visit concluded with spirited conversation over a beautiful and delicious dinner prepared by members of the temple.

### Membership Drive

The governing board made expanding our membership a priority for its deliberations this year. It is encouraging current members to reach out to those who may be interested in participating in SBCS. Membership dues have been set at \$45 for regular members, \$10 for students, and \$25 for members over 65. Treasurer Guy McCloskey has been in conversation with University of Hawaii to contact all of our members from the recent past and is sending reminders to renew subscriptions. He has simplified the process of paying for subscriptions online, but has maintained the possibility of paying via mailing in a check. We plan to continue to send newsletters to current and past members.

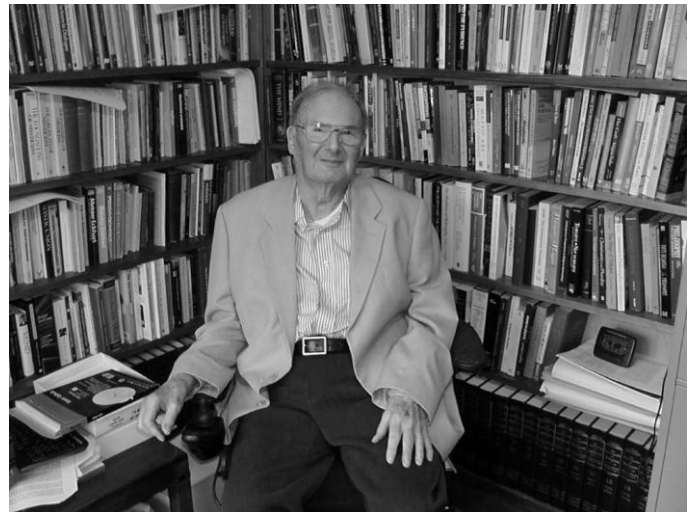
Traditionally the newsletter has been sent to a limited number of non-profit, monastic, or research centers, but we hope to begin sending free subscriptions to academic departments with an interest in Buddhist-Christian studies or related fields. If you know of an institution that we should add, contact the newsletter editor at [jaseitz@gmail.com](mailto:jaseitz@gmail.com).

*Sandra Costen Kunz and Jonathan Seitz*



### Professor John Hick (1922–2012)

*The following obituary is courtesy of Dr. Sharada Sugirtharajah, Senior Lecturer in Hindu Studies at the University of Birmingham. Dr. Sugirtharajah organized a conference in his honor in 2011. She is also editing a festschrift based on this conference, which is to be published later this year by Palgrave Macmillan. Multimedia from the conference can be found via the [conference's multimedia page](#); of special note are appreciation videos from many of Professor Hick's colleagues and students (Julius Lipner, Chester Gillis, Ursula King, Paul Knitter, Timothy Musgrove, Perry Schmidt-Leukel, Gavin D'Costa, Anastasia Scrutton, and Stephen T. Davis). We are grateful for her sharing the following obituary and personal reflection with us. --Editor*



John Hardwood Hick (1922-2012) who has died aged ninety, was Emeritus H.G. Wood Professor of Theology at the University of Birmingham, and Fellow of the Institute for Advanced Research in Arts and Social Sciences at the University. He was also Emeritus Danforth Professor of the Philosophy of Religion at Claremont Graduate University, California. He had held academic positions at Cornell University, Princeton Theological Seminary and the University of Cambridge. He had received honorary doctorates from the Universities of Uppsala, Glasgow and Birmingham.

John Hick is one of the most original and influential philosophers of religion in the English-speaking world. His books have, between them, been

translated into sixteen languages, and twenty books and innumerable journal articles have been written discussing his ideas. His *An Interpretation of Religion* (1989, 2nd ed, 2004), based on his Gifford Lectures, has been particularly influential, receiving the Grawemeyer Award for significant new thinking. *His Evil and the God of Love* (1966, 2nd ed. 2007) has been almost equally influential. He has published seventeen books, including several for students and the general public, the most recent being *Between Faith and Doubt: dialogues on religion and reason* (2010).

John Hick initiated new and challenging ways of thinking about disputed questions in philosophy of religion and theology and his ideas have generated a lively debate. Hick's advocacy of religious pluralism was grounded in practical realities. He was at the forefront of race relations in Birmingham, and as co-founder of All Faiths for One Race (AFFOR) Hick played a pivotal role in promoting community and inter-faith relations in the 1970s.

The John Hick Centre for Philosophy of Religion was established in 2011. It is located in the University of Birmingham's School of Theology and Religion.

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**A Personal Tribute**

John Hick was not only a world-renowned philosopher of religion, but also one who has touched the hearts of many. I have been deeply touched by his humanity, largeness of heart, humility and deep respect for people from diverse backgrounds, and for people with faith or no faith. It is so refreshing to come across a person like John whose theological and philosophical concerns were not divorced from what was happening on the ground. It is rare to find in a person such a wonderful combination of profound scholarship and graciousness. John was a guru in the truest sense of the term - one who didn't expect or encourage blind devotion, but invited a creative and critical engagement with his ideas.

We have lost a great scholar, a valued friend and a guide to many who have known him

personally. He will be missed greatly, but the rich legacy he has left behind will continue to inspire people of all ages and backgrounds. May his soul rest in peace in the Transcendent which is beyond all words—'trancategorical'—as John would like to call it.

Dr. Sharada Sugirtharajah  
Senior Lecturer in Hindu Studies  
School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion  
University of Birmingham



**2012 Strengh Award  
Call for Nominations**

The Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies is now receiving nominations for the 2012 Frederick Strengh Book Award for Excellence in Buddhist-Christian Studies. Nominations must be received by Dec. 31, 2012. The winner will be announced at the annual meeting of the Society. The criteria for nominating and making the award are:

1. The subject matter of the book should be inspired by and relevant to Buddhist-Christian relations, but subject matter is not narrowly limited to books on dialogue or to books that are half on Christianity and half on Buddhism.
2. The scholarship must be original and the writing clear. The book must make an important contribution to issues relevant to the context of Buddhist-Christian dialogue.
3. Books can be considered for nomination within five years of their publication date (i.e. the 2012 award must be for a book published in 2007 or later).

Nominations can be made by any person other than the author(s) or editor(s), using the [downloadable nomination form](#) or the [online form](#).

The completed form may be sent electronically to [ayong@regent.edu](mailto:ayong@regent.edu) or a printed copy can be submitted by postal mail to Amos Yong, Chair of the Frederick Streng Book Award Committee, Regent University School of Divinity, 1000 Regent University Drive., Virginia Beach VA 23464. Self-nominations are not permitted. Publishers of books must be willing to supply review copies to members of the committee for evaluation in order for the book to be considered.

Please do not hesitate to contact Glenn at the e-mail address above with any questions. Thank you!



**BUDDHIST CHRISTIAN STUDIES  
IN THE NEWS**

[“U.S. Top Draw for Christians And Buddhists: Global Immigration Study Also Finds 25% of Jews Outside Country of Birth”](#)

Wall Street Journal

[“Barbara Johnson’s Buddhist Catholicism”](#)

Washington Post

[“Meditation to Academics: Religion on Grounds Students practice non-Western religions openly on Grounds”](#)

(University of Virginia) Cavalier Daily



**MEMBERSHIP IN THE SBCS**

To enroll as a member of the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies, complete the on-line form on our website <http://society-buddhist-christian-studies.org/appform.html> or send your name, address, and membership fee to:

Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies  
c/o Guy McCloskey  
1720 S Michigan Ave #3303,  
Chicago, IL 60616-4865

Enclose a check for \$45.00 (\$10.00 for students, \$25 for senior citizens) payable to “Society for



**Society for Buddhist Christian  
Studies Graduate Student  
Essay Call for Submissions**

*May 30 Deadline*

In order to encourage the participation of interested graduate students in the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies, the Society is continuing its annual graduate student essay award competition this spring.

We are now accepting any essays written by graduate students for classes related to the area of Buddhist-Christian studies. **Faculty members are asked to encourage those students who have written excellent papers to submit those papers for consideration.**

To submit a paper, students themselves should e-mail it to Glenn Willis at [willisg@bc.edu](mailto:willisg@bc.edu). Together with the submission, students should include a cover letter that includes the following: student’s name, program, institution, e-mail address, the course for which the paper was prepared, and the professor of that course. The deadline for submission is **May 30, 2012.**

The winner of the competition will receive a \$500 award, and must present the paper during the annual meeting of the society for Buddhist-Christian Studies in Chicago, IL, Nov. 17-20, 2012.

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Buddhist-Christian Studies.” The Society cannot accept foreign currency or personal checks from foreign countries unless drawn on a U.S. bank. International money orders in U.S. dollars are acceptable.

Members receive the Society’s *Newsletter* and our annual journal *Buddhist-Christian Studies*.

### CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEWSLETTER

The *Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies Newsletter* is published twice annually: in the spring and the fall. Please contact the Editor to share information with our readers. The deadline for the fall issue is September 1.

In addition to reports on our annual meeting (concurrent with the American Academy of Religion) and calls for the Frederick Streng Book Award for Excellence in Buddhist-Christian Studies and for the Graduate Student Essay Prize, the *Newsletter* also publishes information on conferences, retreats, lectures, and other events. We welcome obituaries or reports on major figures in the field of Buddhist-Christian Studies.

Your contributions ensure the continued existence of our newsletter. All submissions are subject to editing for clarity and length. Send items to Jonathan Seitz [jaseitz@gmail.com](mailto:jaseitz@gmail.com).

All other correspondence related to the Newsletter at the return address below:

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### SOCIETY FOR BUDDHIST- CHRISTIAN STUDIES NEWSLETTER

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