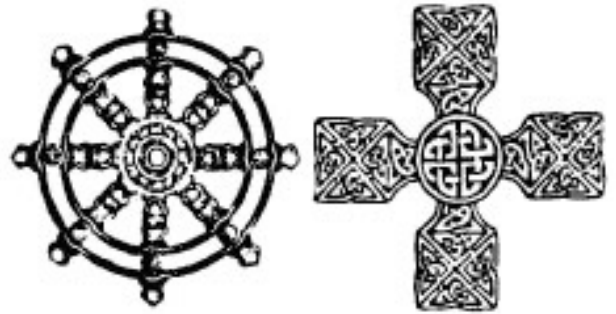


# Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies Newsletter



Vol. 46

Fall 2010

## *News of the Society*

### **2010 SBCS Annual Meeting**

**American Academy of Religion (AAR)**  
**October 29-30, 2010**  
**Atlanta, Georgia, USA**

**Friday, October 29**

Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies  
9:00–11:30 am  
Theme: Board Meeting

**Friday, October 29**

Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies  
1:00–3:30 pm  
Theme: Board Meeting

**Friday, October 29**

Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies and  
Women and Religion Section  
4:00–6:30 pm

Miriam Levering, University of Tennessee, Knoxville,  
Presiding

Theme: *The Scholarly Contributions of Rita M. Gross*

This panel provides a critical look at the scholarly contributions of Rita M. Gross. Each panelist examines a particular aspect of the wide ranging body of work of Rita Gross.

Panelists:

Judith Simmer Brown, Naropa Institute  
*Tibetan Buddhist Studies*

Kathleen Erndl, Florida State University  
*Teacher and Mentor*

Nancy Falk, Western Michigan University  
*Colleague*

Paul Knitter, Union Theological Seminary  
*Contributions to Buddhist-Christian Dialogue*

Terry C. Muck, Asbury Theological Seminary  
*Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies*

Rosemary Radford Ruether, Pacific School of Religion  
*Feminism*

Responding: Rita Gross, University of Wisconsin, Eau  
Claire

**Saturday, October 30**

Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies  
9:00–11:30 am

Terry C. Muck, Asbury Theological Seminary,  
presiding

Theme: *Can/Should Buddhists and Christians do  
Theology/Buddhology Together?*

Panel Discussion:

Grace Burford, Prescott College  
Wendy Farley, Emory University  
John Makransky, Boston College  
Amos Yong, Regent University

11:00 am Business Meeting

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### European Network of Buddhist-Christian Studies Conference

#### “Hope: A Form of Delusion? Buddhist and Christian Perspectives”

June 30–July 4, 2011  
Liverpool Hope University, U.K.

The theme of the 9th European Network of Buddhist-Christian Studies conference is: “Hope: A Form of Delusion? Buddhist and Christian Perspectives.” Invited speakers will address five themes: Hope and the Critique of Hope; Hope in Pastoral Situations; Embodiments of Hope; Hope in Situations of Hopelessness; Eschatologies of Hope. Speakers include: Professor Sathi Clarke; Professor Mitsuya Dake, Professor Richard Gombrich; Professor Anthony Kelly; Dr Sallie King, Dr Hiroshi Munehiro Niwano and Peggy Morgan. In addition, papers are invited for the following open sessions:

1. Friday afternoon: Forum for Postgraduate Research Students and Recognised Researchers. Proposals for academic papers from postgraduate research students and other recognised researchers are invited for this forum. These papers need not be on the theme of the conference but should relate to Buddhist-Christian Studies. Parallel sessions will be arranged if enough proposals are accepted.
2. Friday evening: Forum for Practitioners and Activists. Proposals for non-academic workshops or presentations are invited for this forum. These should relate to Buddhist-Christian encounter and could focus on activities such as socially engaged initiatives, meditation programmes, or artistic encounters. It is hoped that Buddhist and Christian

communities/groups involved in Buddhist-Christian encounter will offer presentations on their work in this session.

3. Sunday afternoon: Hope and Buddhist-Christian Relations. Proposals are invited for academic papers on the theme of “Hope and Buddhist-Christian Relations.” The title of the session is specific but sufficiently open to allow for diversity of theme. Parallel sessions will run if enough proposals are accepted.

It is expected that papers and presentations will not last longer than 20 minutes with 10 minutes for feedback and discussion. Further details of the conference programme are published on the Network’s website: <http://www.buddhist-christian-studies.org/>

Proposals should include: your name, address and academic position/ affiliation; session for which the paper/presentation is submitted; title of paper; a synopsis of the content of the paper that demonstrates its relevance to the theme of the session.

Proposals for the consideration of the Network’s Management Committee should be e-mailed to Dr Elizabeth Harris, President of the Network, by December 31, 2010: [harrise@hope.ac.uk](mailto:harrise@hope.ac.uk)



### Raimon Panikkar: Life and Legacy



Prof. J. Abraham Velez de Cea  
Eastern Kentucky University

## Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies--3

The interreligious theologian, intercultural philosopher, and pluralist mystic Raimon Panikkar died in Tavertet, Barcelona, on August 26, 2010. He was 91. A pioneer of interreligious dialogue and comparative theology, Panikkar claimed to be at the same time yet without contradiction a Christian, a Buddhist, a Hindu, and a secular man.

Panikkar's multiple religious belonging was not a matter of choice and shallow eclecticism but rather a matter of personal experience and profound spiritual growth. His distinction between eclecticism and syncretism might be helpful to understand the complex nature of his religious identity. Eclecticism "is an uncritical mixture of religious traditions and an agreement among them obtained by chopping off all possible discrepancies in favor of an amorphous common denominator." On the contrary, syncretism "is allowing for a possible assimilation of elements by virtue of which these elements cease to be foreign bodies so that organic growth within each tradition is possible, and the mutual fecundation of religious traditions becomes a genuine option" (*The Intrareligious Dialogue*, New York, 1978).

Another point I would like to clarify is that Panikkar's multiple religious belonging was not a question of being primarily Christian and secondarily something else, as if truth could be quantified. Panikkar objected to this "modern" way of thinking. I remember a conversation with him about this issue in which he compared these attempts to quantify religious identity to those who try to understand the Trinity as being either one or three. He said that if you begin counting you miss the point, and then he added in a defiant tone: "I am 100 % Christian, 100% Hindu, 100 % Buddhist and 100% secular." When I insisted and told him that for many people multiple religious belonging is just not possible, Panikkar replied: "Well, it is my experience, I cannot help it."

Panikkar's multiple religious belonging was often misunderstood and cost him the distrust of both Christians and Hindus. For instance, in 1966, Panikkar applied for a chair in Hindu philosophy at the prestigious Banaras Hindu University. Though everybody agreed he was by far the most competent candidate, he was not offered the position because for

many conservative Hindus Panikkar was not Hindu enough.

Similarly, many conservative Catholics today would say that Panikkar went too far with his distinction between Christ and the historical Jesus; for them Panikkar was not Christian enough. However, this would be unfair. As I understand Panikkar, he was not trying to undermine any Christian claim. Quite the contrary, he was challenging what he perceived as a tribal Christology and a reduction of Christianity to a 2000-year-old sect. Time will tell, like it did with great thinkers such as Nāgārjuna, Śankara, Thomas Aquinas, and Meister Eckhart, who were also criticized at first by their respective traditions. Perhaps Panikkar was simply ahead of his time, and what today seems controversial to some will become the norm in the future; it would not be the first time.

Panikkar was an embodiment of interreligious dialogue, and his theology was the result of such dialogue. He was born in Barcelona on November 3, 1918. His mother was a Catholic from Catalonia, north-east of Spain, and his father was an Indian Hindu from Kerala, south of India. After studying philosophy and natural sciences in Barcelona, Madrid, and Bonn, he joined the recently created Opus Dei in 1940. It should be clarified that in the aftermath of the Spanish civil war and compared to the pre-Vatican II National Catholicism of Franco's regime, the Opus Dei was a progressive Catholic organization for lay people interested in sanctifying their professional work.

Panikkar was ordained a Catholic priest in 1946 and became the chaplain of a students' dormitory in Madrid (Colegio Mayor la Moncloa). That very year he earned his first doctorate, in Philosophy with a dissertation entitled *El concepto de naturaleza: análisis histórico y metafísico de un concepto* (Complutense University of Madrid, 1946, published in 1951). He was offered a position at the Complutense University but decided to continue with his pastoral work in Madrid, Barcelona, and Salamanca. After the Spanish conference of Bishops objected to some of his writings, Panikkar went to Rome at the end of 1953 to finish his theological studies at the Lateran University.

In 1954, Panikkar visited India for the first time. His encounter with Hinduism and Buddhism made a great

impact on him and ignited an internal dialogue, which he called “intra-religious dialogue.” This inner dialogue and his growing disagreement with the theology and spirituality of Opus Dei led him to leave Rome in order to reside in India. He lived mostly in Varanasi (Benares), the diocese to which he remained affiliated until his death. Although Panikkar was based in India, he traveled to Europe frequently and for diverse reasons; for instance, to earn his doctorate in Chemistry (Complutense University of Madrid, 1958), to participate in the Synod of Rome and the Second Vatican Council, and to defend his doctoral dissertation in theology, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (Pontifical Lateran University in Rome, 1961, published in London, 1964).

In India Panikkar was influenced by other pioneers of Hindu-Christian dialogue such as Father Jules Monchanin (Swami Paramarubiananda), the Benedictine monk Henri Le Saux (Swami Abhishiktananda), and the English Benedictine father Bede Griffiths (Swami Dayananda). Panikkar also practiced dialogue with many Hindu intellectuals including T.R.V. Murti and learned Buddhist monks such as Bhikkhu Kashyapa, Samdhong Rinpoche, and the Dalai Lama. Perhaps the quote that best captures the outcome of Panikkar’s intra-religious dialogue is: “I 'left' [Europe] as a Christian, I 'found' myself a Hindu and I 'return' a Buddhist, without having ceased to be a Christian” (*The Intrareligious Dialogue*, New York 1978).

In 1966, Panikkar moved to the United States. He was invited to teach at Harvard University. However, in 1971, he accepted a chair in Comparative Religion at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he remained until 1987. During his time in the United States, Panikkar continued to travel to India on a regular basis, alternating his teaching career in California with long periods of time in Varanasi. He retired from the university in 1987 and returned to Spain, to his Catalonian roots, to reside in the small, remote, and beautiful village of Tavertet, north of Barcelona.

Panikkar’s contributions to Christian theology, philosophy of religions, interreligious dialogue, Hindu-Christian dialogue, and Buddhist-Christian dialogue are

impressive. He is the author of more than forty books and 900 articles originally written in German, French, Italian, English, Spanish, and Catalan. His complete works are currently being published in Italian and Catalan, but there are already plans to publish them in English and Spanish.

Although there are already several excellent books on diverse aspects of Panikkar’s thought, none of them has taken into account all of Panikkar’s writings. In fact, his Gifford Lectures, *The Rhythm of Being*, perhaps his *magnum opus*, was published just a few months ago. Another difficulty is that Panikkar’s thinking has evolved overtime. For instance, the 1964 first edition of Panikkar’s *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* is inclusivist. However, as Dupuis has pointed out,<sup>1</sup> the 1981 second edition of the book, as well as his later writings, are unmistakably pluralistic. Panikkar has also revised substantially many of his books written in the 70s. For instance, two of his most important works *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (London 1973) and *The Silence of God: The Answer of the Buddha* (Maryknoll 1989) have been somewhat superseded by revised editions published in other languages.

Panikkar’s thought is too complex to be simplistically presented in a few pages. Besides, I do not claim to be an expert in Panikkar but rather one of his students, someone who has learnt much from his wisdom and guidance over the last 18 years. Panikkar was my doctoral father, and the person who encouraged me to study Buddhism both scholarly and from inside so that I could better practice dialogue with the Catholic tradition. Here I limit myself to sketch Panikkar’s approach to interreligious dialogue.

1) The justification for interreligious dialogue. For Panikkar interreligious dialogue is unavoidable and indispensable, not only for obvious social and political reasons but also for metaphysical, anthropological, and epistemological reasons. Reality itself is dialogical, that is, relational, interdependent. The poles of reality cannot be isolated and fragmented. Likewise, the poles

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<sup>1</sup> For an illuminating discussion of the differences between Karl Rahner and Panikkar, see Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, (Orbis Books, 2002), 52-59.

are irreducible to monolithic oneness. Panikkar calls this dialogical view of reality pluralism, which he defines as “the insight that the empirical multiplicity of things can neither be reduced to intellectual unity nor left alone in an unrelated plurality: *diversitatis splendor*.” (“Religious Identity and Pluralism” in *A Dome of Many Colors*, ed. Sharma and Dugan 1999).

Human beings are also dialogical; we are *animal loquens*. Without dialogue we cannot be truly human. We are persons, knots in a net of relationships; dialogue is a vital necessity, not a luxury for a few experts or representatives of religious traditions. Epistemologically, we see reality from the perspective of our own window and we believe that we perceive the entire panorama. However, we discover in dialogue that others make similar claims from their respective windows. From inside we see what for us is the entire panorama and the limited window of others. Yet outsiders claim to see a different panorama and the limited nature of our window. Thus, we become aware of our contingency and realize we need dialogue with others in order to expand the perspectives of our respective windows.

2) The ethical requirements for dialogue. For Panikkar interreligious dialogue must be open in four different senses. First, dialogue must be open in the sense of being inclusive, not excluding anybody. Second, dialogue must be open in the sense of lacking a pre-established and hidden agenda. The rules and the language of dialogue cannot be pre-determined, and imposed upon others by a particular tradition; dialogue itself is where the rules and the language of dialogue are forged. Third, dialogue must be open in the sense of being free from dogmatic, non-negotiable constraints. Everything can be put into question, and nothing can be discarded a priori, not even conversion. If we are not intellectually humble, if we are not willing to learn something significant from others, and if we are unaware of the relativity of our positions, dialogue cannot be challenging and lead to mutual enrichment. Panikkar calls this aspect of openness “imparative attitude.” Fourth, dialogue must be open to all dimensions of our nature, not just to our intellect. Panikkar calls “dialogical dialogue” this dialogue that involves the entire person. For Panikkar the openness of dialogue is not another dogma but rather a participation

in the intrinsic openness of reality. Dialogue ought to be open because reality is open. We do not have to know in advance where dialogue may take us; the Spirit is not necessarily subordinated to the Logos; the limits of thinking do not have to overlap totally with the limits of being.

3) Dialogue as a religious act and a primary *locus theologicus*. The future of humankind depends on a genuine religiosity that unites (*religat*) human beings with each other and with the whole of reality. Dialogue is an indispensable spiritual practice to achieve this goal. Without dialogue the world would collapse, and human beings could not be fully human. Panikkar acknowledges the important practical goals that dialogue might help to attain. However, for him dialogue is an end in itself, a religious act, a liturgical act, an expression of the human quest for truth. Dialogue is open-ended because our nature is open-ended; dialogue does not provide definitive answers because there are not definitive questions. Dialogue is never complete because there is always room for new developments. Yet each dialogue is complete because it is an end in itself; dialogue is more, never less, than a means to foster peace, mutual understanding, and new theological insights.

*Editor's Note: Prof. Velez de Cea recommends this video clip in which Panikkar explains why we need to participate in interreligious dialogue: <http://raimon-panikkar.org/english/videos.html>.*

## New Documentary on Gethsemani

Filmmaker Morgan Atkinson describes his new documentary this way: “*A School of the Lord's Service* is an invitation to see, hear and appreciate more fully the essence of the monastic lifestyle as lived at the Abbey of Gethsemani in rural Kentucky. This twenty-five minute program explores worship, work and the rhythm of daily life within the Trappist community which was the home of the acclaimed spiritual writer Thomas Merton.”

The film is available for US \$20.00, plus \$5.00 shipping and handling. For more information, go to [www.morganatkinson.com](http://www.morganatkinson.com).



## Retreats and Other Opportunities

The following retreats are offered by Holy Family Passionist Retreat and Conference Center, 303 Tunxis Road West Hartford, CT 06107-3119 USA. For more information, call (860) 521-0440 or email [holyfamilyretreat@cprov.org](mailto:holyfamilyretreat@cprov.org).

### **Zen Spirit-Christian Spirit Nov. 12-14, 2010**

Presenter: Fr. Robert Kennedy, S.J.  
Retreat Offering: \$250.00

This silent retreat for both men and women offers an opportunity to grow closer to God through a deeper contemplative prayer life, strengthened by the presence of others. The retreat is open to persons of all religious and non-religious affiliations; it includes zazen (seated meditation), kinhin (walking meditation), chanting, dharma talks and daisan (one-on-one interviews with the teacher) and beginners' instruction. Easy on and off shoes are recommended. Dinner is Friday 6:00-7:00 p.m. Mandatory beginners' instruction at 7:00 p.m. on Friday. For returning retreatants, the retreat begins at 8:00 p.m.

Fr. Robert Kennedy, S.J. is a Jesuit priest and Zen teacher in the White Plum lineage. He studied with Yamada Roshi in Kamakura, Japan, with Maezumi Roshi in Los Angeles, and with Glassman Roshi in New York. Glassman Roshi installed Kennedy as *sensei* in 1991 and conferred Inka (his final seal of approval) in 1997, making him a *roshi* (master). Kennedy Roshi is author of *Zen Gifts to Christians* and *Zen Spirit, Christian Spirit*.

### **Mindfulness Meditation Retreat April 8-10, 2011**

Presenters: Patricia Plouffe St. Onge and Timothy St. Onge  
Retreat Offering: \$250.00

The mystic Kabir reminds us, "God is the breath within the breath." We invite you to come and open yourself to God's Spirit for your own personal healing and the healing of our world. There will be time for quiet and reflection, for instruction and questions. The retreat for men and women will involve mindful breathing, sitting and walking meditation, and sacred ritual. The leaders will be available for individual consultation. The weekend begins on Friday evening with buffet dinner from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. and concludes with Sunday brunch at noon.

Patricia Plouffe St. Onge, M.A., M.S.W. and Timothy St. Onge, Ph.D. have been engaged in religious education, psychotherapy, and pastoral counseling for over 35 years. They are long term students and practitioners of both Christian and Zen forms of meditation. They practice and teach mindfulness in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh and work with individuals, couples, and groups.

### **Zen Spirit-Christian Spirit June 10-12, 2011**

Presenter: Fr. Kevin Hunt, O.C.S.O.  
Retreat Offering: \$250.00

This silent retreat for both men and women offers an opportunity to grow closer to God through a deeper contemplative prayer life, strengthened by the presence of others. The retreat is open to persons of all religious and non-religious affiliations; it includes zazen (seated meditation), kinhin (walking meditation), chanting, dharma talks and daisan (one-on-one interviews with the teacher) and beginners' instruction. Easy on and off shoes are recommended. Dinner is Friday 6:00-7:00 p.m. Mandatory beginners' instruction at 7:00 p.m. on Friday. For returning retreatants, the retreat begins at 8:00 p.m.

Fr. Kevin Hunt, O.C.S.O., a Trappist Monk at Spencer Abbey, is the first North American Trappist to be both Catholic monk and authorized Zen instructor.



## Unitarian Universalist Buddhist Fellowship Convocation April 8-10, 2011

The Unitarian Universalist Buddhist Fellowship will have its fourth convocation, returning this year to the Garrison Institute in Garrison, New York. Convocation teachers will be James Ford and David Rynick, leaders of the Boundless Way Zen Community, the first Zen community in North America to bring teachers of different Zen lineages together to create a distinctively Western and American vision of Zen. Boundless Way teachers have been influenced by their experiences as leaders and participants in Unitarian Universalism.

For registration and more information, go to <http://www25.uua.org/uubf/UUBFConvocation-Flyer-2011.pdf>.



## The Dalai Lama in the USA

**Public Talk in Palo Alto, CA, USA on October 14:** His Holiness will give a public talk on *The Centrality of Compassion in Human Life and Society* organized by Stanford University. Contact Website: [www.dalailama.stanford.edu](http://www.dalailama.stanford.edu)

**Conference in Palo Alto, CA, USA on October 15:** His Holiness will participate in a conference on *Scientific Explorations of Compassion and Altruism* organized by Stanford University. Contact Website: [www.dalailama.stanford.edu](http://www.dalailama.stanford.edu)

**Teaching in Atlanta, GA, USA on October 17:** His Holiness will give a short teaching on *The Nature and Practice of Compassion* at Emory University. Contact Website: [www.dalailama.emory.edu](http://www.dalailama.emory.edu)

**Inter-Faith Conference in Atlanta, GA, USA on October 17:** His Holiness will participate in an inter-faith conference on *The Pursuit of Happiness* at Emory University. Contact Website: [www.dalailama.emory.edu](http://www.dalailama.emory.edu)

**Conference in Atlanta, GA, USA on October 18:** His Holiness will participate in a full-day scientific conference on *Compassion Meditation: Mapping Current Research and Charting Future Directions* at Emory University. Contact Website: [www.dalailama.emory.edu](http://www.dalailama.emory.edu)

**International Conference on Tibetan Buddhism in Atlanta, GA, USA on October 19:** His Holiness will inaugurate the three-day 2010 International Conference on Tibetan Buddhism at Emory University. Contact Website: [www.dalailama.emory.edu](http://www.dalailama.emory.edu)

**Panel Discussion in Atlanta, GA, USA on October 19:** His Holiness will participate in a panel discussion on *Spirituality, Creativity and Arts* at Emory University. Contact Website: [www.dalailama.emory.edu](http://www.dalailama.emory.edu)

**Award Presentation in Cincinnati, OH, USA on October 20:** His Holiness will accept the International Freedom Conductor Award from the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. Contact Website: [www.freedomcenter.org/dalailama](http://www.freedomcenter.org/dalailama)

**Public Talk in Oxford, OH, USA on October 21:** His Holiness will give a public talk on *Ethics in the Modern World* organized by Miami University. Contact Website: [www.miami.muohio.edu/dalai-lama](http://www.miami.muohio.edu/dalai-lama)

**Visit the SBCS Website**

[www.society-buddhist-christian-studies.org](http://www.society-buddhist-christian-studies.org)

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# Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies--8

## CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEWSLETTER

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

Your contributions ensure the continued existence of our newsletter. All submissions are subject to editing for clarity and length. Send items as MS Word attachments to Peter Huff: [huffp@xavier.edu](mailto:huffp@xavier.edu) or [phuff@centenary.edu](mailto:phuff@centenary.edu).

All other correspondence may be sent to:

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Cincinnati, OH 45207-4442 USA

## MEMBERSHIP IN THE SBCS

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

Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies  
c/o Dr. Harry Wells  
6288 Purdue Drive  
Eureka, CA 95503 USA

Enclose a check for \$45.00 (\$25.00 for students, senior citizens, and monastics) payable to "Society for 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*.

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## SOCIETY FOR BUDDHIST-CHRISTIAN STUDIES NEWSLETTER

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