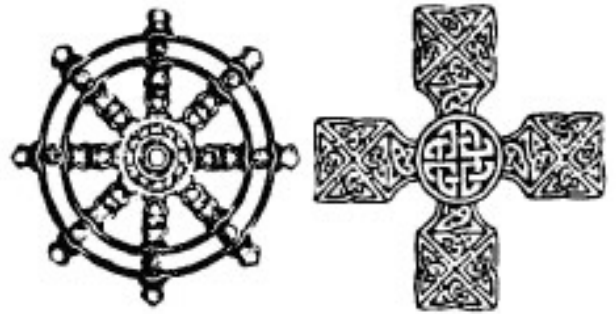


Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies Newsletter



Vol. 45

Spring 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

Report on 2009 Annual Meeting

American Academy of Religion (AAR) November 6-7, 2009 Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Sandra Costen Kunz, Phillips Theological Seminary

Amos Yong, Regent University School of Divinity

The Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies (SBCS) sponsored two sessions in conjunction with the 2009 annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion. The first session was titled "The Boundaries of Knowledge in Buddhism, Christianity and Science." The theme for the second session was "Buddhist-Christian Dialogue in an Age of Science."

The first session, a panel discussion of *The Boundaries of Knowledge in Buddhism, Christianity and Science*, ed. Paul Numrich (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), considered the epistemological questions raised by Buddhist, Christian, and scientific insights on the inadequacies of conceptualization and language for understanding reality. The project that produced the book was funded by The Templeton Foundation, which also generously supported this panel.

After a welcome by moderator Miriam Levering (University of Tennessee), the book's editor, Paul Numrich (Theological Consortium of Greater Columbus), gave a brief overview of the volume, followed by reflections on their chapters by two contributors: Dennis Hirota (Ryokoku University) and Paul Ingram (Pacific Lutheran University). Amos Yong (Regent University School of Divinity) responded to Hirota's chapter, and Sandra Costen Kunz (Phillips Theological Seminary) responded to Ingram's. Hirota and Ingram each made a few remarks on these responses, leading into an open discussion including other contributors to the book: John Albright (Lutheran School of Theology), Roger Blomquist (Argonne National Laboratory), Tom Christenson (Capital

University), and David McMahan (Franklin and Marshall College).

Hirota's paper, based on his chapter "Shinran and Heidegger on Truth," examined the epistemology of Shinran, founder of the Japanese Shin Pure Land Buddhist tradition. Hirota noted that for both Shinran and Heidegger truth is less a matter of asserting propositions and more a matter of the recognition and turning away from prior perceptual distortion. This permits the emergence of a new structure of awareness, an emergence which parallels Thomas Kuhn's paradigm shifts in scientific understanding.

In his response, Yong called for a greater role for "particularistic or even confessional approaches" within "the religion-science discussion." He thus noted with appreciation the grounding of Hirota's paper in a Buddhist tradition that is not "broadly Tibetan," like much work in Buddhist-science dialogue. He compared and contrasted Shinran's teachings about the corruption and purification of human reason with those of the Council of Dordt's five-point condensation of Protestant reformer John Calvin's soteriology, pointing out that both have a salvific intention.

Ingram argued that while science has amassed reliable information about physical reality, and Buddhist and Christian practitioners have amassed reliable knowledge about the structures of human experience, all three traditions confront epistemological boundaries imposed by their methods of inquiry. Questions arising at these boundaries form the foundation for a science-Buddhism-Christianity dialogue. Noting that science demonstrates that "nature is rooted in a realm . . . only half-translated into our phenomenal experience," Ingram reviewed how scientists and Buddhist and Christian practitioners "work back from relevant experiences on the phenomenal level, and then ask what hypothetical reality might constructively explain these experiences."

Kunz pointed out that in his examples of "working back" from experience toward hypotheses, Ingram cites many reasons for epistemological humility. Noting her research on how methods of Christian spiritual discernment might yield hypotheses for reducing the ecological crisis, she argued that Christians who have ignored the boundaries of human

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knowledge have contributed to this crisis. She suggested that if western Christians who teach spiritual discernment took Buddhist and current neuroscience insights about human knowing more seriously, their teaching practices might differ less from those of non-western Christians.

The second session, chaired by Amos Yong (Regent University), was a roundtable discussion of Paul O. Ingram's book *Buddhist-Christian Dialogue in an Age of Science* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2008). Respondents included Mark Unno, Associate Professor of East Asian Religions at the University of Oregon; Nancy Howell, Professor of Theology and Philosophy of Religion at Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri; Benjamin Chicka, Ph.D. candidate in the philosophy of religion and theology at Claremont Graduate University; and former president of the SBCS, Stephanie Kaza, Professor of Environmental Studies at the University of Vermont.

Unno and Howell appropriately combined to reflect on Ingram's book from their respective experiences, as a Buddhist and a Christian, of dialogue with him over the decades. Chicka's response focused on certain theoretical and methodological issues with which he resonated but yet had critical questions about. Finally, Kaza reflected on the volume from her perspective in environmental studies and the applied or technological sciences. Professor Ingram then provided a rejoinder to his interlocutors, after which the session opened up to interactions with the audience.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies Graduate Student Essay Award Competition

As part of the effort of the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies to encourage the participation of graduate students, the Society is initiating a graduate student essay award competition.

We are currently accepting papers written by graduate students for one of their classes in the area of

Buddhist-Christian studies. Faculty members are asked to recommend the students with the best papers to submit them for consideration of this award.

To submit a paper, please email it to Karen Enriquez at enriquek@bc.edu. Together with your submission, please include a cover letter that includes your name, your program, your institution, email address, the class for which the paper was written, and the professor of that class. Deadline for submission is May 30, 2010.

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 Atlanta, GA from Oct. 30-Nov. 1, 2010.

Further information on the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies can be found at: <http://www.society-buddhist-christian-studies.org/>. For more information about the essay competition, please email Karen Enriquez at enriquek@bc.edu.

Editor on the Move

This fall I will take a leave of absence from Centenary College to assume the Besl Family Chair in Ethics/Religion and Society at Xavier University. You can still reach me at phuff@centenary.edu or contact me at huffp@xavier.edu. My new postal address will be: Peter A. Huff, Xavier University, Hinkle Hall, 3800 Victory Parkway, Cincinnati, OH 45207 USA.



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

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rhythm of daily life within the Trappist community which was the home of the acclaimed spiritual writer Thomas Merton. Allowed remarkable access, the producer's cameras capture the simplicity of ancient traditions while also showing how the monks adjust to modern times. The brothers of Gethsemani have been in Kentucky since 1848 but their quest is timeless. *A School of the Lord's Service* brings their search to life in vivid and enlightening ways." The film is available for US \$20.00, plus \$5.00 shipping and handling. For more information, go to www.morganatkinson.com.

SILENCE AND AWARENESS 2010 A Retreat Experience in Christian Insight Meditation

The following retreat opportunities are offered by Resources for Ecumenical Spirituality (Forest Lake, Minnesota, USA).

July 9-10 (Metta) and July 10-18 (Silence and Awareness)

Holy Spirit Retreat House
Janesville, Minnesota

Instructors: Mary Jo Meadow OCDS, Tom Arndt, Hal Richardson, with Fr. Tom Boedy

August 13-14 (Metta) and August 14-22 (Silence and Awareness)

Bethany Spirituality Center
Highland Mills, New York

Instructors: Fr. Daniel Chowning, Mary Jo Meadow OCDS, Hal Richardson

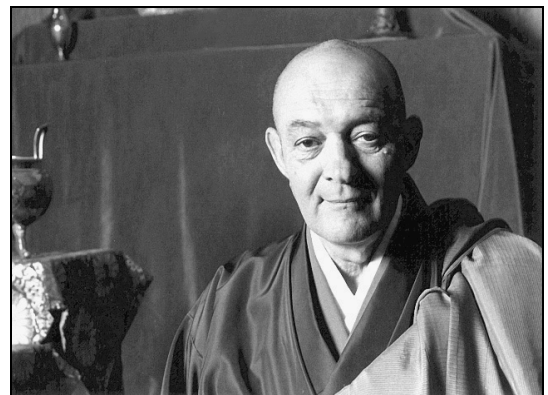
Silence and Awareness retreats develop knowledge of the teachings of Christian Mystics, especially St. John of the Cross, skill in insight (Vipassana) meditation practice, the ability to manage intense experience, and enhanced skills for daily living.

No previous meditation experience is needed to attend. Practitioners of many traditions find this practice helpful to deepen self-knowledge and spiritual growth. The retreat is preceded by an optional day of Loving-Kindness (Metta) Practice.

Each day offers two meditation instruction sessions,

Eucharist, group sitting meditation, walking practice, an integrative conference, communal reconciliation, and question and answer sessions. Individual interviews with retreat staff are available daily to clarify meditation instructions or to offer consultation, reconciliation, and guidance.

For more information, contact Resources for Ecumenical Spirituality, P.O. Box 85, Forest Lake, MN 55025-0085 USA, 651-464-7489, www.resecum.org.



A MEMORY OF JOHN DAIDO LOORI 1930-2009

*Sensei Patrick Kundo Eastman
Wild Goose Sangha
Cotswolds, England*

During 2000, I was leading a retreat on Contemplative Prayer for Blessed Sacrament parish in Rochester, New York. Earlier that year a very generous friend had told me that she was willing to provide the necessary financing for me to go to Japan for a month to experience Zen in a Buddhist Monastery there. I had started looking into the possibility when in the *Tricycle* magazine I was attracted to an advertisement for the residency programme of Zen Mountain Monastery at Mount Tremper in upstate New York. I mentioned this

to my friends in Rochester, and they offered to take me down to the monastery to meet Roshi Daido. We met and immediately I knew that I wanted to spend a month under his direction rather than travel all the way to Japan. I discussed the possibility with him and he readily agreed to take me as a student for a month. On arrival back home in Tulsa, I spoke with my sponsor who also willingly supported my decision to spend a month under the direction of Abbot Daido Looi at Zen Mountain Monastery. My Zen teacher Roshi Ruben Habito from the Maria Kannon Zen Centre was in agreement, and the decision was finalised.

It was with more than a little trepidation that I arrived on the doorstep of the Monastery at the beginning of October 2001. Although the buildings had at one time been constructed as a Youth camp for a Catholic group, with a larger than life carving of Christ on one of the exterior walls, it was a bit unnerving to find myself committed to spending a month in a Buddhist monastery renowned for its strong discipline. Yet the strangeness and the challenge were mediated by the beauty of the surroundings. The monastery is set on the hillside of a small mountain in the Catskills not far from the famous (or infamous!) Woodstock. The fall colours were brilliant this year and the crisp cold weather and the sparkling streams all awakened a profound sense of the "Grandeur of God," as Gerard Manley Hopkins would have said. It was quite demanding to find myself having to follow a very structured day which included several hours of sitting zazen and having to take part in an allocated work practice carried out in silence. Within this structure were the talks given by Daido. His presence pervaded the whole space and time, and although intensely challenging it was just what I needed at the time to reinforce my own practice of Zen. There were many times, however, during the month when I asked myself what on earth I thought I was doing there. After all, I was a 64 year old Catholic priest who should have been easing back on life rather than engaging in this strange activity.

October was in the fall session of "Ango," which is a period at a Zen monastery when the physical activity is lessened in order to give more time for an intense spiritual practice. I don't think it was related in any way to the fact of my presence there, but Roshi

Daido had chosen for our study time together Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism*. She was a Christian who wrote this book in 1911 after an exhaustive study of the writings of the great mystical tradition of the Christian Church down through the ages. It was a groundbreaking book at the time, although a little dated in the twenty-first century. It was a particular joy to me, though, as it meant that I could really join in the discussion on the text. In that environment I was touched by Daido drawing our attention to the words: "The creation was opened to me . . . to know the *hidden unity in the Eternal Being*. To know the hidden unity in the Eternal Being – to know it with an invulnerable certainty, in that all-embracing act of consciousness with which we are aware of the personality of those we truly love – is to live at the fullest the Illuminated Life enjoying all creatures in God and God in all creatures."

Not too long after I arrived, Roshi Daido offered a week-long course on Zen and photography. Being a resident I was allowed to take part in this programme, and it was during that time that I got to know more of Daido personally. Alongside his expert teaching on photography he told many stories from his personal life with the expertise of a skilled raconteur. I discovered that he was born in Brooklyn, New York, in what amounted to an Italian Catholic ghetto. His experience there was responsible for him becoming alienated not only from Catholic Christianity but from all religion. He described himself as a "militant atheist" at that stage of his life. (Interestingly a seeming love/hate relationship still seemed to be there with the Catholic Church when I first met Daido. This was only modified to a greater appreciation after he had participated in a Buddhist/Christian conference at the Trappist Abbey of Gethsemani where he became most impressed with the monks who lived there.) Initially he became a very good scientist and worked on research in the production of various commercial products. His next stage took him to photography, starting a course in photography with the great American photographer Minor White. He told us that for the first three months of the course they were forbidden to touch a camera but spent their time in silent meditation. Minor White saw this as an essential first step in the art of photography. This has been borne out in recent research which has shown meditation to have an influence on one's ability to see. I was to discover the truth of this for myself in the

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course we were on, as we were immersed in long hours of zazen before we ever set out to take a photograph. During the course we had assignments to produce photographs that spoke of Love, Elseness, and Suchness. It was quite a task, but it taught me much about seeing beyond the surface into something that is inexpressible by words but can be hinted at in a visual image. Later I spent more time studying the work of Minor White and his early associates in the early days of American Art Photography. This led me to write a booklet entitled *I spy with my little eye*. Since then “Seeing” has been a powerful word in my approach to reality. This was clearly begun at the feet of Roshi Daido.

The whole pattern of the days and weeks at Zen Mountain Monastery did much to help me bring an integration of the whole of my life. I fear that, like many others, my life was divided into several different and almost unconnected departments. A schedule where zazen, work, practice, and study, etc., were so thoroughly integrated became, under Daido’s direction, very formative for me. It also resulted in a movement away from acquisition and achievement to accepting things just as they are—to become aware that, to use words of Daido, “I was perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

Following my time in residency I decided to request becoming a formal student of Roshi. This involved first of all an interview with a group of senior students and members of the resident monastic community. It lasted over an hour, but permission was given for me to proceed to the next step which involved a solid twelve-hour time of sitting zazen with just a short break for some food. This was followed by the ceremony of entry into the position of a formal student in the Mountain and Rivers Order (MRO). So a few months after my residency, I formalised my commitment to sitting zazen as a regular practice by standing at the entrance to the Zendo (Meditation Hall) and saying as over six hundred other students had done since 1980:

*I come here realising the question of Life and Death is a vital matter.
I wish to enter the Zen training program of Zen Mountain Monastery.*

*I understand the rules of this temple
And assume full responsibility for maintaining them.
Please guide me in my practice.*

Looking back on it now it seems very austere and formal, yet I also believe that it was exactly what I needed at the time to ensure that I remained utterly faithful to a Zen practice. It was what strengthened my practice and my attention to the breath over the next three years. Remembering back to that night I recall that Daido gave me much encouragement by calling me back to the very basic principles of Zen. This continued not only through personal contact but through his many teaching videos which I acquired. I still have these videos here in England, and although I no longer have the personal contact I find that I still turn to the videos periodically for encouragement and challenge.

When I moved back to live in England in May 2004, I could no longer fulfill the requirements of a grey-robed student of the MRO, so I relinquished my place as a student and turned to my dear friend and part mentor Fr. Robert Kennedy Roshi and asked him to be my teacher. With gentleness and exquisite insight he built on the foundations provided by Ruben Habito and Daido Looi to the point where he was able to pass transmission to me as a Sensei in the White Plum Asangha. I know that I have had three of the very best Zen teachers in the West and in that I have been exceedingly fortunate. Each has contributed in his own way to drawing out the best from me. I was indeed saddened when I heard that Daido had died at 7:30 am on October 9, 2009. It was then that I realised for myself the very special relationship that exists between a Zen student and his teacher. I shall always remember Daido for helping me form a personal discipline that has enabled me to remain faithful to my deepest desire.

The Rock at Mt. Tremper
Prevents the earth from slipping away.
The sapling grows into
A tall strong straight tree.
Nine Bows to the Rock

(© Sensei Patrick Kundo Eastman. Reprinted with permission of the author.)

Daisaku Ikeda's 2010 Peace Proposal

In a peace proposal titled "Toward a New Era of Value Creation" released on January 26, 2010, Daisaku Ikeda, SGI president, calls for accelerated moves toward the realization of a world without nuclear weapons. He also urges concrete steps toward generating meaningful employment opportunities in the current economic downturn and making investment in education for girls a priority development objective.

Noting that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference scheduled for May 2010 provides a vital opportunity for progress, Mr. Ikeda outlines three imperatives:

1. To establish nuclear weapon non-use zones, particularly in Northeast Asia, South Asia and the Middle East, as a step toward complete denuclearization.
2. To revise the statute of the International Criminal Court to classify the use of nuclear weapons as a war crime.
3. To create a multilateral system by which the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council work together toward the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, as provided for by Article 26 of the UN Charter which gives the Security Council responsibility to formulate plans for the regulation of armaments.

Mr. Ikeda urges intensive efforts over the next five years to achieve these goals, culminating in a nuclear abolition summit to be held in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 2015, which would symbolically mark the end of the era of nuclear weapons within the lifetimes of survivors of the nuclear bombings of those cities.

He notes that in the case of chemical and biological weapons, prohibitions against their use preceded treaties comprehensively banning their production and stockpiling. He urges that the same strategy be used to strengthen and expand constraints against the use of nuclear weapons as a concrete step toward their abolition.

By creating "expanding circles of physical and psychological security," such efforts could draw in countries whose nuclear intentions are unclear or which stand outside of existing nonproliferation regimes.

Mr. Ikeda cites nihilism as an underlying factor in the crises facing the world today. He notes that both nuclear weapons and the current economic crisis are the products of technological competence propelled by the deepest, most primitive forms of human desire decoupled from a sense of constructive purpose. Religion has traditionally provided the frameworks moderating human desire and has a particular responsibility to generate positive values that can contribute to counteracting these trends.

In response to the deepening inequalities of the global economic system, the SGI President calls for a renewed focus on ensuring opportunities for what the International Labour Organization has called "decent work"--work that enables people to meet their needs with dignity. He proposes the creation of a G20 taskforce dedicated to this goal.

Noting that 2010 is the tenth anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which focuses on women as active agents in creating peace, Mr. Ikeda urges a renewal of efforts to ensure gender equality in education and calls for women's concerns and perspectives to be put at the center of human development initiatives. He also calls for schools to function as centers for fostering among young people a vibrant culture of peace.

This is the 28th annual peace proposal Mr. Ikeda has issued to commemorate the SGI's founding on January 26, 1975.

[\(English translation of the 2010 Peace Proposal in pdf\)](#)

(Adapted from a January 26, 2010, SGI Office of Public Information press release)

Visit the SBCS Website

www.society-buddhist-christian-studies.org

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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 or phuff@centenary.edu.

All other correspondence may be sent to:

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MEMBERSHIP IN THE SBCS

To enroll as a member of the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies, send your name, address, and membership fee to:

SBCS Membership
c/o Dr. Harry Wells
College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Humboldt State University
Arcata, CA 95521 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*.

SOCIETY FOR BUDDHIST-CHRISTIAN STUDIES NEWSLETTER

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