

Society for Buddhist- Christian Studies



Vol. 56

Fall 2015

News of the Society

In this Newsletter

Special announcement: to register for the Friday evening trip to the Atlanta Shambhala center, please RSVP to this address. We are including a special service for Rita Gross, who as I write this is in hospice (see below).

The Annual Meeting next month is an opportunity to meet, to reconnect, and to share our work. This year's meeting is in Atlanta, and there are

- Board and Member Meetings
- Two panels, and
- An opportunity to visit the Atlanta Shambhala Center (please register before our Friday meeting).

In this newsletter also find

- Short summaries of AAR panels and meeting times and locations
- A notice of the most recent Japan Society meeting and topic
- Announcement of our Streng Prize winner
- Contents of our most recent Journal, which should hit members' mailboxes by the end of the year

As always, this is an excellent time to renew memberships.

Jonathan A. Seitz, SBCS Newsletter Editor

Announcement on Rita Gross



Rita Gross, a founding member of SBCS, a respected senior scholar, and a longtime coeditor of *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, has suffered a major stroke and is in hospice at home. It is impossible to state the impact she has had on our group over the years. A future newsletter and the 2016 journal will carry tributes to Professor Gross's life and work. To attend an event that will feature a service for Professor Gross, see the Friday afternoon event at Shambhala below (pg.2). ([Tricycle has a short article on Dr. Gross.](#))

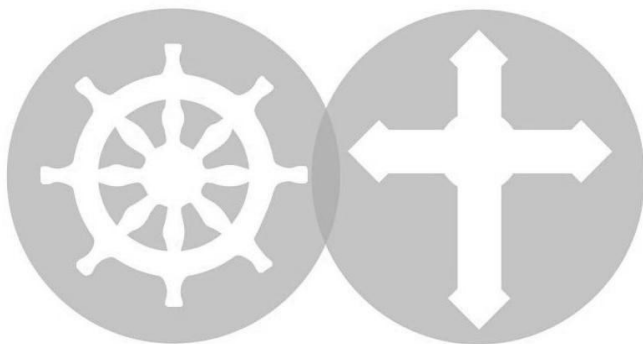


Membership & Website Redesign

If you haven't renewed for 2015, please do so now. Membership includes our newsletters, our journal, and other benefits. [You can renew via our website.](http://www.society-buddhist-christian-studies.org/)

Alicia W. Brown has helped the Society to undertake a major reconstruction of our website. Visit the new site:

<http://www.society-buddhist-christian-studies.org/>



Check out our Facebook page and give it a like—it is becoming our best way to communicate news:

<https://www.facebook.com/BuddhistChristianStudies/>

We also will begin using a general email for mailings, RSVPs, and other announcements:

societybuddhistchristianstudy@gmail.com



2015 SBCS Annual Meeting

November 20-21, 2015

Concurrent with AAR/SBL
Atlanta, GA

Board meetings:

P20-102- Friday Nov. 20, 9:00 AM to 11:30 AM

P20-211- Friday 1PM to 3:30PM.

International Room C at the **Marriott Marquis**.
20 attendees, conference style.

Friday Afternoon Visit to Shambhala Center

6:40-9:15

Our group will visit Atlanta's Shambhala center on Friday, November 20. We have chartered a bus and Shambhala is providing a dinner for us (both free of charge). This trip will include a Buddhist service for Dr. Rita Gross. If possible, please RSVP (write to either Jonathan Seitz or to the SBCS email or contact us on facebook).

Atlanta Shambhala Center:
<http://atlanta.shambhala.org/>

Panels

P20-315-- What is Wrong with Us? What is Wrong with the World?

Friday November 20, 4:00-6:30 PM. **Room A702** at the **Marriott Marquis (Atrium level)**

Christianity and Buddhism, in diverse ways, assert a fundamental flaw in the human condition expressed by terms like “sin” and “delusion”—a flaw that we are largely unconscious of, which prevents us from noticing the extent to which we ourselves as individuals and societies contribute to the harms we see around us. In what ways are Christian or Buddhist diagnoses of a basic human flaw critical for understanding the causality of current world problems, such as growing social and economic inequalities, religious animosities, racism, environmental degradation, and violence? Can any of these problems be addressed without adequate consideration of such traditional diagnoses? If not, what specific Christian or Buddhist understandings of the human condition need to be raised up today to shed light on such problems? How might Buddhist and Christian perspectives challenge or complement each other? And how might these traditional perspectives on the human condition undergo reinterpretation when relating them to current problems?

Presiding: Alice Keefe, akeefe@uwsp.edu, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

Presenters:

Thomas Cattoi, tcattoi@jstb.edu, Jesuit School of Theology

Glenn Willis, glenn.r.willis@gmail.com, Misericordi University

Roger Haight, rogerdhaight@gmail.com, Union Theological Seminary

Hsiao Lan Hu, hhu@udmercy.edu, University of Detroit Mercy

Responding: Kristin Largen, klargen@ltsu.edu, Lutheran Theological Seminary

P21-107- Buddhist and Ignatian Spiritualities--- Points of Intersection and

Dialogue

Saturday, November 21, 9:00AM-12:00PM, **Hanover Hall, Room D** at the **Hyatt Regency**

NOTE: SBCS business meeting begins at 11:30AM, Alice Keefe, UW-Stevens Point presiding.

In Buddhist traditions we find various forms of meditative practice that lead an individual through an inner transformation in stages of development to a life of wisdom and compassion that reaches out to other beings. Among the forms of contemplation found in the Christian tradition, the Ignatian path of The Spiritual Exercises describes different stages culminating in the Contemplation on Divine Love, which grounds the practitioner in a life of selfless dedication to the service of others. This panel will highlight points of intersection and dialogue between Buddhist and Ignatian contemplative practices and spiritualities, seeking deeper appreciation of aspects of each in light of the other, with possible implications for our current lives and world.

Presiding: Sandra Kunz, sandra.kunz@alum.ptsem.edu, Trinity Theological Seminary

Presenters:

Sarita Tamayo-Moraga stamayomoraga@scu.edu; Santa Clara University

Andre Delbecq adelbecq@scu.edu; Santa Clara University

Ruben Habito rhabito@mail.smu.edu, Perkins School of Theology, SMU

Responding: Karen Enriquez enriquezk1@xavier.edu, Xavier University

P22-106-- Panel Co-sponsored by the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies

and the Society for Hindu-Christian Studies:

Thomas Merton at 100: His Influence on the Study of Hinduism and Buddhism

Monday morning - 9:00 AM-11:30 AM. Marriott-M104 (Marquis Level)

--George Kilcourse, Bellarmine University, Presiding

--Francis X Clooney, SJ, Harvard University

"All the Way from India: Merton in the Mirror of Hinduism"

--Tom Forsthoefel, Mercyhurst University

"Merton and the Axes of Dialogue"

--Judith Simmer-Brown, Naropa University

"Ambivalence in Shangri-la: Merton's Orientalism and Dialogue"

--John Keenan, Middlebury College (emeritus)

"Thomas Merton's Unfinished Journey: From Encounter to Sharing"



Japan Society Conference Report

Palace Side Hotel, Kyoto

August 5—7, 2015

The 34th Conference of the Japan Society for met recently. Conference of the Japan Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies

Eiko Hanaoka (Prof. Emerita)

Osaka Prefecture University

Four lectures and two papers were given, with the theme of Nishida's Philosophy and Christianity.

1. Absolute Nothingness and Creativity — Nishida's Philosophy and the Theology of Progress by Prof. Yutaka Tanaka
Commentator: Prof. Emerita Eiko Hanaoka
2. Nishida's Thinking concerning Freedom by Eiichi Katayanagi
Commentator: Prof. Tetsuro Mori
3. Old Testament and Philosophy —Philosophical Interpretation of Abraham's Offering Story of Isaac by Prof. Emeritus Seizou Sekine
Commentator: Prof. Masako Keta
4. Inquiring about the Religiosity again on the Way of Nishida's Thinking —
On the Problem of Nishida's Philosophy and Christianity — by Prof. Yushi Nagamachi
Commentator: Prof. Katsuto Inoue

Two papers:

1. Nishida's Philosophy and Christianity — Focusing on Freedom and Love by Dr. Samoa Ishii
Commentator: Dr. Norio Imataki
2. Does Christianity accord with Formal Logic ? — Christianity not Discussed in Nishida — by Mr. Katsuyuki Takahashi

Commentator: Prof. Yoshio Tsuruoka



"Suffering, Liberation, and Fraternity":

Report on Buddhist-Catholic Dialogue

Castel Gandolfo and Rome, June 23-27, 2015

Leo D. Lefebure

The Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in collaboration with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue convened a dialogue of 45 Buddhist and Catholic leaders active in the United States of America at the Focolare Movement's Mariopolis Center in Castel Gandolfo near Rome from June 23 to 27, 2015 to discuss the theme, "Suffering, Liberation, and Fraternity." The encounter included a trip to Rome on June 24 for a private audience with Pope Francis. The dialogue took its inspiration from the words of Pope Francis: "Fraternity is an essential human quality, for we are all relational beings. A lively awareness of our relatedness helps us to look upon and treat each person as a true sister or brother; without fraternity it is impossible to build a just society and a solid and lasting peace."¹ The dialogue was also guided by the message of Jean-Louis Cardinal Tauran, president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, to Buddhists for the celebration of Vesakh 2014, "Buddhists and Christians: Together Fostering Fraternity." The Vesakh Message expanded upon the vision of Pope Francis, inviting Buddhists and Catholics "to cooperation with other pilgrims and with people of good will to respect and defend our shared humanity . . . Drawing upon our different religious convictions we are called especially to be *outspoken* in denouncing all those social ills which damage fraternity, to be *healers* who enable others to grow in selfless generosity, and to be *reconcilers* who break down the walls of division and foster genuine brotherhood between individuals and groups in society."²

In the letter of invitation to the Catholic participants, Most Reverend Mitchell T. Rozanski, chair of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops'

Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, described the new form of interreligious dialogue initiated by Pope Francis as "Dialogue and Fraternity." Bishop Rozanski explained that this form of dialogue "seeks to address social ills, heal those who suffer from these ills, and reconcile divisions" by focusing on "(1) relational human suffering and its causes, (2) liberation from such suffering, and (3) the role of universal fraternity in contributing to this liberation in today's society."

The participants came from five major metropolitan areas in the United States of America: New York City, Washington DC, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. Catholic representatives included ecumenical and interreligious officers of the local churches, scholars and pastoral ministers involved in Buddhist-Christian relations, leaders of social service organizations such as the St. Vincent de Paul Society and Catholic Charities, and leaders of Monastic Interreligious Dialogue and the Focolare Movement. Among the Buddhists were representatives of the Buddhist Temple of Chicago, the Shambhala Meditation Center, Heartland Sangha, Chicago Midwest Buddhist Temple, Fo Guang Shan, Hsi Lai Temple, Dharma Drum Mountain, Higashi Honganji Los Angeles, Wat Thai Buddhist Temple, Los Angeles Buddhist Union, Buddhist Church of San Francisco, Berkeley Zen Center, East Bay Meditation Center, Compassion Meditation Center, Washington Buddhist Vihara, Wat Thai of Washington DC, Cambodian Buddhist Society, Won Buddhist Temple, Chuang Yen Monastery, Rissho Kosei-kai, and Chan Meditation Center.

The dialogue was planned in light of the four levels of interreligious dialogue identified by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.³ The organizers were aware that in many areas the dialogue of life has occurred as Buddhists and Catholics have gotten to know and respect each

¹ Pope Francis, "Fraternity: The Foundation and Pathway to Peace," Message for the World Day of Peace 2014, no. 1; http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20131208_messaggio-xxvii-giornata-mondiale-pace-2014.html (viewed August 6, 2015)

² Jean-Louis Cardinal Tauran, "Message for the Feast of Vesakh 2014: Buddhists and Christians Together: Fostering Fraternity," no. 4; http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_20140424_vesakh-2014_en.html (viewed August 6, 2015).

³ Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflection and Orientations On Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel Of Jesus Christ*, no. 42; http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html (viewed August 6, 2015).

other as neighbors, establishing cordial relations. The dialogue of theological exchange among scholars has taken place in many academic settings, fostering better mutual understanding. Monastic Interreligious Dialogue in particular has fostered the dialogue of religious experience, reflecting on the spiritual life of Buddhists and Catholics. The organizers of the dialogue believed that there is need for more emphasis on the dialogue of action, of concrete social action to relieve suffering. They planned the discussion with the hope that there will be local initiatives of Buddhists and Catholics in various areas responding to concrete needs with social action. If these Buddhist-Catholic initiatives succeed, they could become multi-lateral with other participants joining the efforts.

Each morning of the dialogue began with chanting and meditation led by Buddhist participants, followed by celebration of the Catholic Eucharist. Jean-Louis Cardinal Tauran opened the dialogue by commenting, “In a world where diversity is seen as a threat, our coming together today in friendship and peace is a sign of our openness towards one another and our commitment to human fraternity.” Cardinal Tauran elaborated: “We are all pilgrims and I see this Buddhist-Catholic dialogue as part of our ongoing quest to grasp the mystery of our lives and the ultimate Truth.” He noted three stages that are important for the journey of dialogue. First is carrying less baggage, in other words: “Overcoming prejudices, wounds, fears in order to listen to one’s heart and to that of one’s religious neighbor.” The second stage is crossing borders, journeying to know the other side while remaining firmly rooted in our beliefs. This process “can thus turn ignorance into understanding, a stranger into a friend, hostility to hospitality and divergence into convergence.” The final stage is returning home “transformed by what we experienced.” The Cardinal’s words set a hopeful tone and direction for the encounter.

The first day continued with discussions of the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha and Jesus Christ and the later traditions they inspired regarding the causes of relational suffering among persons.⁴ Each day concluded with discussion in the regional

groups, which included consideration of possible future projects in the various local areas.

On Wednesday, June 24, the group traveled to the Vatican for a personal audience with Pope Francis, which for many was the highlight of the week. Cardinal Tauran presented us to Pope Francis, explaining, “We have been engaged in discussing how to collaborate together in a world of divisions.” Pope Francis responded, “It is a visit of fraternity, of dialogue, and of friendship. And this is good. This is healthy. And in these moments, which are wounded by war and hatred, these small gestures are seeds of peace and fraternity. I thank you for this and may God bless you.”⁵ Pope Francis then personally greeted each of the participants, receiving numerous gifts, including a Buddhist blessing. Pope Francis greatly enjoyed the encounter, and his face was beaming with joy. The image of sowing seeds of peace through small gestures inspired the participants and shaped the agenda of the dialogue. Participants were informed that Pope Francis is personally interested in the outcomes of this dialogue.

The following day the discussions continued with consideration of liberation from relational suffering between persons and between persons and all living beings. Donald Mitchell, professor emeritus at Purdue University and a long-time leader in Buddhist-Christian relations who played a major role in organizing the event, offered a very thoughtful reflection on the meaning of creation in light of the theology of Piero Coda. Coda has proposed an innovative understanding of the relationships of love of the Holy Trinity as *nulla*, “nothingness.”⁶ Mitchell explained: “This dynamic of the nothingness of love as the essence of God involves a mutual interrelatedness, a mutual interpenetration, a mutual indwelling. All three of these words are categories about the true nature of the cosmos presented in Huayan Buddhism. For Christians, these categories reflect the dynamic of divine kenotic love that is the source of the event of creation.” Mitchell followed Coda’s lead in interpreting *creation ex nihilo* to mean *creation ex*

⁵ <http://www.romereports.com/2015/06/24/pope-francis-meets-with-buddhist-leaders-oethese-small-gestures-are-seeds-of-peace> (viewed August 6, 2015).

⁶ Piero Coda, *Dalla Trinità: L'avvento di Dio tra sotria e profezia* (Rome: Citta Nuova, 2011).

⁴ The papers will be published in the October issue of *Claritas: Journal of Dialogue and Culture* (www.claritas-online.org).

nihilo amoris: “creation arises from the nothingness of love.”⁷

Hozan Alan Senauke from the Berkeley Zen Center began his reflection on nature and the climate crisis by quoting the Canticum of the Sun of St. Francis of Assisi, which inspired Pope Francis’s encyclical *Laudato Si’*. Senauke related the Buddhist precept not to take what is not given to the environment: “Driving automobiles, flying on airplanes, global production and consumerism—the Industrial Growth Society involves theft. . . . Violating the precept of not stealing is an expression of structural violence.” He stressed that Buddhists resonate with the call of Pope Francis’s encyclical to practice integral ecology: “‘Integral ecology’ is not Christian or Buddhist but truly human. We are responsible to and for the world we live in.” After the dialogue, Senauke posted an online response to the presentations of Catholic social teaching at the dialogue, commenting: “In recent decades we’ve seen the development of socially engaged Buddhism. But it seems to me we are still lacking a rigorous Buddhist equivalent to the ‘Social Gospel.’ We need a ‘Social Dharma’ to care for our common home. This Social Dharma must reach across our different cultures and Buddhist traditions.”⁸

On Friday, the discussion focused on fraternity and its practical implications for the world. Some speakers noted that the word “fraternity” in English is not inclusive of women and one of its meanings refers to college societies that sometimes have questionable reputations. It was pointed out that the term comes from Pope Francis himself, and its connotations in Spanish, French, and Italian may be somewhat different than in English. Speakers discussed various forms of Humanistic Buddhism, including Fo Guang Shan Hsi Lai Temple, the Won Buddhism, and Rissho Kosei-kai. Ven. Miao Hsi, executive director of Buddha’s Light Publications USA, proposed, “On the subject of fraternity, a Buddhist synonym is harmony: harmony within our own mind, harmony between self and other, harmony within the family, harmony in society,

harmony or peace in the world.” Rev. Koichi Sugino of the Rissho Kosei-kai New York Center for Engaged Buddhism and Deputy Secretary General of Religions for Peace, approached the topic of fraternity in light of the positive transformation that frequently occurs in the interreligious projects of his movement. He explained that “the practice of multi-religious cooperation results in:

- 1) A positive change in the image of the other
- 2) A greater increase in the willingness to cooperate with the other
- 3) Falling more in love with your own religion
- 4) A new way of seeing the other through the eyes of that deepened love.”

He concluded: “*Fraternity* is our way forward and can truly be realized through our constant practice of *self-emptying* or *kenosis* and the conversion from seeking our own enlightenment to compassionately seeking the enlightenment and liberation of all.”

At one point in the conversations, there was an animated discussion of situations where there is conflict among religious groups, including Sri Lanka and Myanmar/Burma. Some Buddhists sought a condemnation of what they termed “forceful conversions.” A Catholic representative explained that the Catholic Church rejects this practice. The Rev. Indunil Kodithuwakku Kankanamalage, the Under-Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and a native of Sri Lanka, spoke of the experience of Catholic communities in Sri Lanka.

On Saturday, June 27, participants discussed social issues in the United States that need to be addressed and possible collaborations for the future. Mushim Patricia Ikeda explained that the East Bay Meditation Center in Oakland, California, where she is based, “is a refuge for many who are excluded from or who feel isolated at other U.S. Buddhist temples and centers. Our practice at EBMC is love and inclusivity, made real through our communication agreements and ways of being together.” She mentioned forms of societal suffering such as “homelessness, hunger, gentrification, poverty, addiction, ‘the school to prison pipeline’ for young men of color and incarceration in general,

⁷ Piero Coda, “God and Creation: Trinity and Creation out of Nothing,” *Claritas: Journal of Dialogue and Culture* (2015): 10.

⁸ Hozan Alan Senauke, “Towards a Social Dharma—Caring for Our Common Home, Our True Body,” <http://www.oneearthsangha.org/articles/towards-a-social-dharma/> (viewed August 6, 2015).

unemployment, etc.” She stressed the importance of Buddhists and Catholics taking time to explore “how we want to be together,” in order to build trust and provide a solid foundation for joint activities. She noted that the United States is a racist society and posed the challenge: “If we want to live up to our highest spiritual ideals, we need to start by naming the ways in which power and unearned privilege play out within our own organizations, and in the alliances we are trying to form with other organizations.” For partners who have reflected on this challenge, she posed the further question: “[H]ow can good-hearted people of goodwill, of faith, make the quantum leap in collective consciousness that is required to work together and interact in radically transformative, new ways?” She also noted that practices of contemplation, prayer, and meditation can be powerful resources in practicing deep inquiry and listening.

Dave Barringer, CEO of the National Council of the US Society of St. Vincent de Paul, spoke of principles that guide his organization in concrete social outreach. He stressed the importance of localizing conversations “to bring in people at the grass roots level where real change may occur.” This includes reaching out to youth and young adults in an interesting, interactive format. It also means including community leaders in decision making roles. Barringer noted the immediacy of the challenges: “There are people who need services, other benefits of our work NOW.” He also stressed that participants change in the process of acting together: “We will learn more about each other as we do something directly and together.” He advised looking for existing collaborative groups before creating a new one; he noted that the US Internal Revenue Service approves more than 200 new non-profit organizations every single day! He also urged innovation, observing that often people in need come to multiple service providers, and he called for measuring the outcomes of those who no longer need services. Barringer called attention to the special opportunity that will be opened up by Pope Francis’s visit to the United States in September and will extend to the next US presidential election, and he urged participants: “Use this opportunity to advance causes to the forefront of US discussion and urgency.” He also commented: “We are more powerful in the State Capitol and Capitol Hill when we advocate together across faiths.”

At the conclusion of the dialogue, the participants issued a Joint Statement that briefly described the week’s activities and outcomes. The statement comments: “The dialogue strengthened mutual understanding concerning human suffering and means of liberation, as well as deepened relationships as a basis for interreligious cooperation based on shared values.” It notes that participants will return to their respective regions with a commitment to explore joint action in several areas:

- “Addressing global climate change on the local level

- Creating outreach programs for youth in the cities

- Collaborating in prison/jail ministries and restorative justice matters

- Developing resources for the homeless such as affordable housing

- Educating and providing resources to address the issue of immigration

- Collaborating to create projects with local Catholic parishes and Buddhist communities to address neighborhood social issues

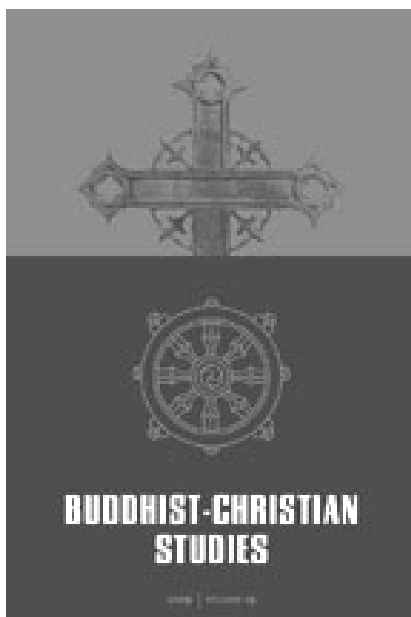
- Developing social outreach programs for value education to families

- Witnessing our shared commitment as brothers and sisters, our religious values and spiritual practices, and our social collaboration with our religious communities and others in our cities.”

Participants will meet in their respective regions to discuss the concrete next steps to be taken. After the dialogue concluded, participants repeatedly expressed their profound gratitude to the organizers and the other participants for this moving experience.



Buddhist-Christian Studies



The 2016 issue is out soon. To receive the journal, update your membership or subscribe. This journal carries the following articles, reports, and reviews:

EDITORIAL

Buddhist-Christian Dialogue: Moving Forward,
Carol Anderson and Thomas Cattoi

MULTIPLE RELIGIOUS BELONGING

Deep Listening and Virtuous Friendship: Spiritual Care in the Context of Religious Multiplicity
Duane R. Bidwell

Like an Elephant Pricked by a Thorn: Buddhist Meditation Instructions as a Door to Deep Listening,
Willa B. Miller

Reflections on Jewish and Christian Encounters with Buddhism, *Harold Kasimow*

Whose Buddhism? Whose Identity? Presenting [and/or Misrepresenting] Shin Buddhism for a Christian Audience, *Kristin Johnston Largent*

Integrating Christ and the Saints into Buddhist Ritual: The “Christian Homa” of Yogi Chen,
Richard K. Payne

Religious Dualism and the Problem of Dual Religious Identity, *Jonathan A. Seitz*

Spiritually Bilingual: Buddhist-Christians and the Process of Dual Religious Belonging, *Jonathan Homrighausen*

COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

Sunyata and Otherness: Applying Mutually Transformative Categories From Buddhist-Christian Dialogue in Christology, *Susan P. Babka*

Comparing Eckhartian and Zen Mysticism, *Jijimon Alakkalam Joseph*

Suñña at the Bone: Emily Dickinson’s Theravadin Romanticism, *Adam Katz*

Bodhicitta and Charity: A Comparison, *Luke Perera*

In Defense of Frugality: Insights from ‘Green Contemplatives’ Across Traditions, *Wioleta Polinska*

Prolegomena to a Comparative Reading of The Major Life of St. Francis and The Life of Milarepa,
Massimo A. Rondolino

Comparative Theology Is Not ‘Business-as-Usual Theology’: Personal Witness from a Buddhist-Christian, *Paul F. Knitter*

“Wide Open to Life”: Thomas Merton’s Dialogue of Contemplative Practice, *Judith Simmer-Brown*

NEWS AND VIEWS, Edited by Jonathan A. Seitz

The Annual Meeting of the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies, *SBCS Secretary Sandra Kunz*

Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies Frederick J. Streng Award 2014, *SBCS Streng Award Committee*

Report on Minzu University Conference on Buddhist-Christian Studies, *Thomas Cattoi*

A Buddhist-Christian Retreat, *Len Tischler and Andre Delbecq*

BOOK REVIEWS, Edited by Sid Brown

Carol Anderson on Hsiao-Lan Hu, *This Worldly Nibbāna: A Buddhist-Feminist Social Ethic or Peacemaking in the Global Community*

Rita M. Gross on Nirmala S. Salgado, *Buddhist Nuns and Gendered Practice: In Search of the Female Renouncer*; Pascale Engelmaier, *Women in Pali Buddhism: Walking the Spiritual Paths in Mutual Dependence*; Alice Collett, *Women in Early Indian Buddhism: Comparative Textual Studies*

Brian D. Berry on Ruben L. F. Habito, *Zen and the Spiritual Exercises*

John D'Arcy May on Robert Magliola, *Facing Up to Real Doctrinal Difference: How Some Thought-Motifs from Derrida can Nourish the Catholic-Buddhist Encounter*

Ruben L.F. Habito on Addison Hodges Hart, *The Ox-Herder and the Good Shepherd: Finding Christ on the Buddha's Path*

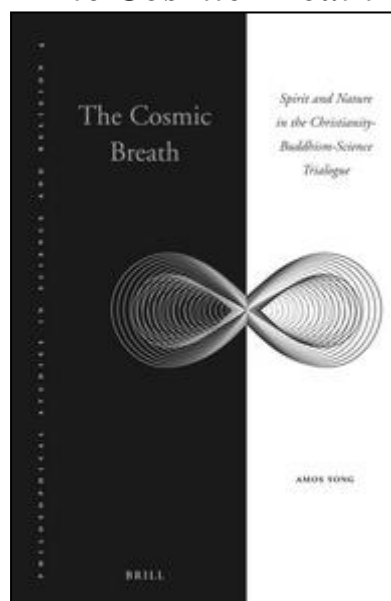
John d'Arcy May on Elizabeth Harris, *Hope: A Form of Delusion? Buddhist and Christian Perspectives*

Amos Yong on Mario L. Aguilar, *Church, Liberation and World Religions: Towards a Christian-Buddhist Dialogue*

Paul Knitter on Peter Feldmeier, *Encounters in Faith: Christianity in Interreligious Dialogue*



2016 Streng Award Winner: *The Cosmic Breath*



Amos Yong, *The Cosmic Breath: Spirit and Nature in the Christianity-Buddhism-Science Triologue* (Brill, 2012), Winner of 2015 Frederick J. Streng Award for Excellence in Buddhist-Christian Studies.

I found Amos Yong's 2015 Streng Award winner nothing short of breathtaking—no apologies for the pun. As one who has spent a career crisscrossing the theological and cultural worlds of Japan and North America, this book is the most refreshing, hopeful, globally relevant, and potentially groundbreaking proposal I have encountered in years. As I made my way through Yong's reasoned and impassioned "pneumatological theology of nature," I was moved again and again by the scope and generosity of the undertaking, which leads theology into new uncharted territory beyond its classical loci. Though I am not a Pentecostal, I found myself

intoning “wows,” “ahas,” and amens” at every turn. Scholars, teachers, students, and practitioners engaged in comparative theology, Buddhist-Christian studies and dialogue, science and religion/theology, and in inter-religious study and witness more generally will be rewarded by the depth and breadth of research, thought, and spiritual passion that went into this volume.

I fully expect and indeed hope Yong’s approach will engender some anxiety and critical reflection among Christian theologians who are still laboring in the long shadow cast by Karl Barth (1886–1968). Ours is an age characterized by a succession of Trinitarian and Christocentric projects that, to this intercultural and interreligious sojourner, often seem to lack the vitality and cutting edge of the crisis theologian’s own missional engagements with the pressing issues of his own culture and time. If I may offer an example of the problem of Barthian scholasticism, the tiny minority Japanese Protestant churches in the Reformed tradition have long labored under the translation, reception, and interpretation of Barth’s weighty legacy. Yet, while seminarians still learn that highly nuanced theological language forged in the furnace of mid-20th century Europe, the future existence of their own churches is under threat—not only because Japan is a rapidly aging society—but because pastors lack a theological vision that can engage Japanese religious and philosophical traditions, science, and pressing social issues. Yong’s work opens a way beyond this kind of impasse. Neither disparaging Barth nor feeling obliged to situate his project within the post-Barthinian enterprise, Yong has turned his gaze to the Spirit, that much neglected third Person of the Trinity, opening up new territory for creative and mutually enriching engagements with science and religious traditions that offer “other lights” on questions of spirit and nature. This book is a witness to theological humility and a call for well-informed interdisciplinary and inter-religious engagements. In my view, Yong delivers on his claim that “A Christian theology of nature can and must learn

from the sciences and other religious traditions, including Buddhism.”

Readers will welcome Yong’s clear prose, all the more remarkable because of the complexity and range of the disparate interlocutors and ideas he dares to take on board. In articulating his proposal for a “Christianity-Buddhism-science triad,” he carefully presents, compares, contrasts, contemplates, and weighs relevant positions from all three partners, striving to allow each voice be heard without sacrificing its unique resonance or quickly harmonizing it with others. While most of the book is devoted to the theoretical spadework that gives warrant to Jong’s basic proposal, he helpfully “road tests” his triad in a concluding chapter on the pressing global issue of the environmental threat. At heart, *The Cosmic Breath* is driven by Yong’s aspiration to offer a positive, self-critical, public, and concrete Christian theological response to religious pluralism and science, as well as pressing ethical issues that impact all sentient beings.

*Tom Hastings is an intercultural practical theologian who taught from 1988-2008 in Japan as a mission co-worker of the Presbyterian Church (USA). After returning to the United States in 2008, he was Director of Research, Associate Director (2008-2011), and Houston Witherspoon Fellow in Theology and Science (2011-2012) at the Center of Theological Inquiry in Princeton. From 2012-2015, he pursued a three-year project funded by the John Templeton Foundation as senior research fellow at the Japan International Christian University Foundation, collaborating in interdisciplinary and inter-religious research with scholars and institutions in Japan and East Asia. He is currently a consultant for the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia. He is author of *Practical Theology and the “One Body of Christ”* (Eerdmans, 2007) and *Seeing All Things Whole: The Scientific Mysticism of Kagawa Toyohiko (1888-1960)* (Pickwick, 2015).*



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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. Submissions may be edited for clarity and length. Send items to Jonathan Seitz jaseitz@gmail.com.

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