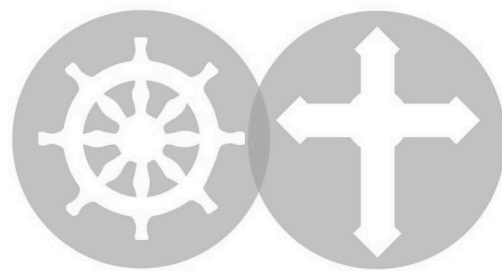


Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies



Vol. 60

Fall 2017

News of the Society

In this Newsletter

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

- Board and Member Meetings
- Two SBCS panels (“Learning from Islam,” “Uses and Misuses of Anger”) as well as a related panel (“Sharing the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises”).
- An opportunity to gather for a meal on Friday night with the local Fo Guang Shan group

In this newsletter also find

- A report on the recent European Network meeting
- A report on the recent Japan Society meeting
- A notice about the Streng Prize
- Info on the 2018 Parliament of the World's Religions
- Info on Ling Jiou Mountain Buddhist Society's New International Center in Manhattan

Jonathan A. Seitz, SBCS Newsletter Editor



2017 Annual Meeting

Boston, MA

Board Meeting, Friday November 17, 9-11am and 1-3:30 pm, Vermont Rm, Marriott Copley Place

This is our annual organizational meeting for elected board members and officers to discuss and plan. There is also a business meeting Saturday at 11:30 open to all members.

Friday Evening Trip, 6:40-9pm

Friday evening we are planning an outing to Fo Guang Shan, Boston. Please write to Jonathan Seitz or add your name [on this google sign-up sheet](#).



SBCS Panels

Friday Nov. 17 from 4 to 6:30 PM, entitled “What Buddhists and Christians Can Learn from Muslims,” New Hampshire Room at the Marriott Copley Place.

Saturday Nov. 18 from 9:00 am to 11:30 AM, “Uses and Misuses of Anger in Buddhism and Christianity,” in the same room.

The SBCS membership/business meeting follows the Saturday morning panel and runs from 11:30AM to noon.

The following descriptions are reprinted from the AAR Online Program Book.

Panel: *What Buddhists and Christians Can Learn from Muslims*

Friday - 4:00 PM-6:30 PM

Marriott Copley Place-New Hampshire (Fifth Level)

In the current climate, constructive interreligious dialogue with Islam is a critical task for both

Buddhism and Christianity. In this panel, several different examples of either Buddhist or Christian engagement with Islam are described, including the positive outcomes of the engagement. Two Muslim scholars offer a response and suggestions for further dialogue.

Glenn Willis, Misericordia University

Tawhid and Surrender: Islamic Challenges for Buddhist Modernism

John Sheveland, Gonzaga University

Radicalization and Mercy: Christian Theological Learning from the Open Letter to al-Baghdadi

Kunihiko Terasawa, Wartburg College

A Buddhist Fascination with Islamic Mysticism: In Case of Toshihiko Izutsu 井筒俊彦 and Ibn Arabi

Responding:

Bahar Davary, University of San Diego

Amir Hussain, Loyola Marymount University

Panel: *Uses and Misuses of Anger in Buddhism and Christianity*

Saturday - 9:00 AM-12:00 PM

Marriott Copley Place-New Hampshire (Fifth Level)

The role of anger in both Buddhism and Christianity is complex and multivalent. Both religions teach the need to combat anger and its destructive consequences, particularly the way it fractures relationships. However, at the same time, anger can be a powerful tool for advocacy and action, particularly for the sake of justice. In this session, different aspects of anger are explored, with an eye both to anger's constructive role and also to its dangers.

The **business meeting** for the Society for Buddhist Christian Studies will take place immediately following this session (11:30-noon). All Society members are welcome to attend.

Carolyn Medine, University of Georgia

Claude AnShin Thomas: Pausing At Hell's Gate and Undoing Anger

Thomas Cattoi, Santa Clara University and Graduate Theological Union

Searching for Holy Anger: Voices from the Philokalia and the Tibetan Buddhist Tradition

Lama Rod Owens, Dharma Boston Sangha

The Wrathful Guru: Exploring the Vajrayana Understanding of Anger

Carol S. Anderson, Kalamazoo College

Anger Makes Us Ugly: Reflections from Pali Buddhism

Joel Daniels, Georgetown University

The Wind of the Spirit Blows Gently and Fiercely: A Pentecostal Perspective on Love and Anger

Responding:

Judith Simmer-Brown, Naropa University

The following panel include SBCS members or related scholars and may be of interest:

Contemplative Studies Unit

Panel: *Sharing the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises across Religious Traditions*

Daniel A. Madigan, Georgetown University, Presiding

Monday - 9:00 AM-11:30 AM

Sheraton Boston-Constitution A (Second Level)

This session brings together four scholars whose expertise spans the contemplative traditions of China, India, and Japan, but who are united by their shared experience with the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. Speakers include the authors of three recent books on the prospect of adapting the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises for non-Christians. Unlike some other contemplative practices with large numbers of religiously diverse practitioners, the Spiritual Exercises are difficult to loosen from their theological center; they are strongly Christocentric, with content that is firmly centered

on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. How might the Exercises be adapted in order to make them more accessible and fruitful for those with very different theological commitments? What are the theological justifications for this practice? What are its aims and goals? Panelists will also discuss what the Exercises can teach us about the role of contemplative practice in diverse university settings.

Roger Haight, Union Theological Seminary
Ruben L. F. Habito, Southern Methodist University

Erin Cline, Georgetown University
Francis X. Clooney, Harvard University

Business Meeting:

Harold D. Roth, Brown University

Judith Simmer-Brown, Naropa University



European Network

Meditation in Buddhist-Christian Encounter: A Critical Analysis

Report of the 12th Conference of the European Network for Buddhist-Christian Studies (ENBCS) held from 29 June to 3 July, 2017, at Montserrat, Spain.

Martin Repp (Frankfurt) and Elizabeth Harris (University of Birmingham)

The 12th Conference of the European Network for Buddhist-Christian Studies, held from 29 June – 3 July, 2017 in Montserrat ('sawn mountain', sanctuary and monastery) in Spain, critically analysed the role of different forms of meditation in Buddhist-Christian encounter. It drew over sixty participants from different parts of Europe, Thailand and the USA to what was a most evocative setting. In the Middle Ages, Montserrat became a popular place of pilgrimage because of miracles attributed to Mary, who is depicted as a black virgin in the basilica, and thousands of pilgrims continue to come.

The conference topic was examined through five themed sessions, each from the perspectives of

both traditions: Meditation/Contemplation in Traditional Buddhism and Christianity; Christian-Buddhist Encounter through Zen Practice; Christian-Buddhist Encounter through Mindfulness; The Hesychast Tradition and its Affinities to Buddhism; Meditation and Action in Buddhism and Christianity.

Elizabeth **Harris** (Birmingham University), the President of ENBCS, delivered the introductory lecture, "Meditation in Buddhist-Christian encounter: Different contexts, different expressions." She surveyed some 'moments' in the Christian encounter with Buddhist meditation and the Buddhist encounter with Christian contemplation in order to show how changing conditions influenced the relationship between adherents of both traditions as well as their attitudes towards meditation. She began her account with Ippolito Desideri S.J. (1684-1733), who was a missionary to Tibet 1716-1721. He learned the language and appreciated the "sweetness of contemplation in a Buddhist hermitage," even though he declared Buddha to be an "infernal lawgiver." Her other 'moments' included Protestant missionaries in 19th century Sri Lanka under British colonialism and their contesters, and twentieth century rapprochement. The former generally exhibited an exclusivist attitude and did not understand central Buddhist notions such as *dukkha*. D.J. Gogerly (1792-1862), for example, collected, studied and translated Pali texts. Although he tried to be fair to Buddhism, he perceived Buddhist meditation as a form of "mesmeric trance", taking concepts from spiritualism. In reaction to the negative attitude of these missionaries, Anagārika Dharmapāla (1864-1933), who was educated in Christian schools and later influenced by theosophists, criticized the Christian god as violent and capricious and dismissed Christian prayer as a poor substitute for purity of life. In the late 20th century, on the other hand, Christians in the West began to rediscover contemplation, mysticism and Ignatian spiritual practice, and monks such as Thomas Merton inspired Buddhist-Christian inter-monastic dialogue. On the Buddhist side, Lance Cousins (1942-2015) compared Teresa of Avila and Buddhaghosa, and the Buddhist nun, Ayya Khema (1923-1997), towards the end of her life, equated God and *nibbāna*. More recently, Buddhist monks involved in inter-monastic dialogue wrote a commentary on the Rule of St. Benedict, resulting

in a publication entitled *Benedict's Dharma* (2002).

Within the first theme, "Meditation/Contemplation in traditional Buddhism and Christianity", Karl **Baier** (University of Vienna) clarified the Christian terminology of prayer, meditation and contemplation, demonstrating that their roots reached back to Hebrew, Greek and Roman traditions and that their meanings had changed throughout history. Quoting John of Damascus, he explained prayer as "raising the mind to God" and meditation and contemplation as spiritual exercises. Meditation could be conceived as activating the soul, will and mind (Ignatius) with an element of *ruminatio* ("repeated chewing"), and contemplation, as calming down the mind's activities in order to become open to God (Eckhart). They, therefore correlated in polarity. After the 16th century, the practices were separated, and, in the next century, contemplation was marginalized to be rediscovered by individuals and groups, such as the "centering prayer movement," in the 20th century.

Sarah **Shaw** (Oxford University), within the first theme, introduced "Meditation and contemplation in the Southern Buddhist tradition." Beginning with the Buddha biography, she stressed that the Buddha's contribution was to teach a graduated path of meditation that not only involved the mind but also the body, community and ritual. Contesting the Western understanding of meditation as an isolated activity, she linked the concept of *bhāvanā* (meditation/becoming), as expressed in *samatha* (tranquility meditation) and *vipassanā* (insight meditation), with chanting, offerings, devotions and discursive recollections. She clarified key terms used in the southern tradition, such as the *jhāna*, the six *anussati* (recollections), and *sati* (mindfulness), which she stressed had a strong ethical component in *Abhidhamma*. She saw the contemporary mindfulness movement as a reduction that dropped much that was traditionally central to its practice.

Within the second theme, "Buddhist-Christian encounter through Zen practice," Ursula **Baatz** (Vienna) began a lecture on "Why do Christians study Zen?" by asking whether it was a "spiritual or religious transgression" for Christians and Jews to practise Zen. To illustrate her answer, she

presented case studies, for example of Fr. Enomiya Lassalle S.J. (1898-1990), a pioneer Christian practitioner of *zazen*. He experienced the 1945 nuclear devastation of Hiroshima, after which he collected funds worldwide to build the Peace Memorial Church. He first turned to Zen in order to better understand the Japanese people, to enculturate Christianity in Japan and to deepen prayer. After 1956, he studied Zen practice under Harada Sogaku (Sanbō Kyōdan). His first book on Zen (1960) was censored by the Roman Catholic Church, his approach criticized as "paganization." Lassalle, however, perceived Zen as a kind of "natural mysticism," which was in conformity with the natural theology emphasized by the Second Vatican Council in *Nostra Aetate* and his work was deeply influential. The meditation bench, for instance, came through Lassalle to the West. A further case study was Thomas Merton, "a Christian monk with a Buddhist leaning," who attempted to inject a deepened contemplative tradition in his monastery.

Robert **Sharf** (University of California, Berkeley), in his presentation on "Why Buddhist taught Zen meditation to Christians?" first stressed that Buddhism was a missionary religion with a truth to communicate. That was why Buddhists taught Zen to Christians! He then explained who the transmitters were, what kind of Buddhism they taught and what their aims were. Some of the teachers were reformers within Rinzai. Members of the Sanbō Kyōdan, however, exerted the greatest influence over Westerners, although it was a marginal lay group in Japan, criticized by established Zen orders, because it reduced the complexity of Zen practice, its study and rituals, to a simple and fast path to success. In this respect it resembled a New Religious Movement, although it should be kept in mind that Sanbō Kyōdan had a precedent -the early Chan movement in China, which began as a simple practice for lay people. Sanbō Kyōdan, therefore, gained more credence outside Japan than inside, offering to the West a practice that was different from the total practitioner context of Japan.

The third theme, "Christian-Buddhist encounter through mindfulness" opened with Andreas **Nehring's** (Erlangen University) lecture on "The Western interest in mindfulness meditation." During the last three decades, he explained, the Buddhist term "mindfulness" had proliferated in

Western societies, becoming a glass through which contemporary spirituality could be viewed. Using a bare attention model, its methods were partly derived from Theravāda Buddhism, but filtered through practices such as Jon Kabat-Zinn's "Mindfulness- based stress reduction" (MBSR). Many people were being helped, but the most important question for Nehring was not so much whether its modern iteration was Buddhist but what its multiple applications in therapy, counseling, education, economy and religious practice said about the translation between private practice and public discourse, or about the search for a meaningful practice that was not necessarily religious. A cultural studies approach was needed if its impact on Christians and others was to be understood.

The second lecture on this theme was given by Elise Anne **DeVido** (Duke Kunshan University), who spoke on "Thich Nhat Hanh's propagation of mindfulness in the West." She first introduced his life and work, and then passed to his use of 'mindfulness' and critiques of it. At a young age, he became a Buddhist monk in Vietnam and later studied languages at university. In the 1960s, he travelled to Europe and America, lecturing against the Vietnam War. He met Martin Luther King and Thomas Merton, and addressed the UN with a five point peace proposal. Exiled for these activities by his own government, he reinvented himself as a Vietnamese Zen monk in the West, gave retreats and in the early 1980s founded Plum Village in France. Only at this time, did he begin to speak of "mindfulness" as a practical teaching for his lay followers. Why was Thich Nhat Hanh so successful in the West? DeVido stressed his activism for peace and the environment, his gentle personality, his language skills, his poetry, his ability to use the media, his tailor-made retreats and meditation techniques, his self-governing lay communities worldwide and also the lack of scandals. He surfed on a wave of interest in Zen and mindfulness in the West, but there was also a bounce-back phenomenon, with Plum Village type communities founded in Asia – a reverse orientalism. The criticism that his representation of mindfulness was divorced from the complexity of its practice in Asian Buddhist communities was fully recognized.

The fourth theme "The hesychast tradition and its affinities to Buddhism" was first addressed by

Nicholas Alan **Worsam** (Glasshampton Monastery), who delivered a paper on "Hesychasm and Buddhism", with an emphasis on Theravāda. In both traditions, he stressed, meditation consisted of attaining a peaceful mind and culminated in the achieving of wisdom. With this presupposition, he introduced passages from Pāli and Orthodox texts which showed parallel elements. For example, the driving force behind meditation is energy (*virīya*) in the Pāli tradition and watchfulness (*nepsis*) in the hesychastic tradition. It is accompanied by mindfulness (*sati*) in the Pāli tradition, which again is similar to *nepsis*, the watchfulness that sees negative thoughts as they approach and guards the intellect. Parallels were also present, he demonstrated, in the use of the body in meditation. "Mindful breathing" in Buddhism was similar to, although not the same, as "restraining the drawing-in of breath" in hesychastic contemplation. To give one other example, the "rapture" of the first *jhāna* had its parallel in mystical "union with God", and the "pure bright mind" of the fourth *jhāna* in the "infinite light of God," illuminating everything. Differences, however, were also pointed out, such as within mindfulness of death in the two traditions.

The possibility of comparing the two traditions was also taken up by Elizabete **Taivane** (University of Latvia) in her presentation on "Hesychasm and Tantric Buddhism of Tibet: A comparative analysis of mystical experience." Based on Tibetan sources and Hesychast texts, she also pointed out similar phenomena in the two traditions, such as the experience of darkness and light. Although Buddhist and Christian metaphysics differed, comparisons were possible between Buddhist and Christian anthropologies, as well as between similar states of consciousness during prayer and meditation.

The last theme, "Meditation and action in Buddhism and Christianity," was first addressed by John **Makransky** (Boston College), who spoke from a Buddhist perspective about "The need both for contemplative practice and social analysis for effective action in the world." He compared the explanations of the causes of human suffering in "classical Buddhism" and modern "Christian liberation theology." Whereas Buddhism identified the main cause in delusion and greed, Liberation Theology saw the primary cause for

suffering in oppressive social systems. Whereas Buddhist meditation aimed at liberating human beings by transcending delusions, social analysis targeted the liberation of people from unjust political and economic structures. He stressed that both Buddhism and Christianity recognized kinds of knowing that de-reified the self and self-interest and argued that, since the individual and systemic causes "are mutually conditioning and mutually reinforcing," contemplation and social action, "must inform and empower the other." In this, Buddhists and Christians could give to each other.

Leo D. **Lefebure** (Georgetown University) introduced a Christian view of "Meditation and Action" by providing a historical overview of different "paths" within Roman Catholic orders, all of which combined action and contemplation. The Benedictine Rule stipulated *ora et labora*, which elevated work to the same level as prayer. Whereas Benedictines received all guests as Christ into their monasteries, Francis of Assisi went out into the streets and welcomed lepers and poor people as Christ. He meditated with all creation in praise of God, as his *Canticle of the Sun* showed. The path of the Dominicans centred on *contemplata tradere* (to hand on what has been perceived in contemplation, including the demand for justice). Ignatius of Loyola developed the *Spiritual Exercises*, as "contemplation in action," influenced by the general confession he had made in Montserrat. In the second half of the 20th century, Jesuits such as William Johnston and Aloysius Pieris combined meditation and non-violent action for justice and peace. Toward the end of his presentation, Lefebure cited the Pope's recent encyclical *Laudatio Si' Praise Be to You: On Care for Our Common Home*, in which Francis linked prayer and meditation with work that could protect the earth, calling for an "ecological conversion" of individuals and communities as well as for continued interreligious dialogue and cooperation. The document formed the basis of a Buddhist-Christian dialogue attended by speaker, which "strengthened mutual understanding concerning human suffering and means of liberation." Throughout the presentation the interrelated nature of action and contemplation was stressed.

Within each themed session, there was a plenary, which produced lively discussions, the content of

which will feed into the publication that will result from the conference. In addition, parallel sessions were held for shorter papers on Buddhist-Christian Studies by postgraduate research students and recognized researchers. These ranged from a comparison of Raimon Panikkar and Nishida Kitarō, to Zen-Christian Dual Belonging, to a comparison of passages from the *Vimuttimaggā* and the writings of Evagrius of Pontus. An optional meditation session in the morning as well as a cultural programme, including an organ concert in the basilica and a visit the library and museum, enriched the conference considerably. From the beginning to the end, Dr. Raquel Bouso Garcia (University Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona) and her team organized a splendid and inspiring conference.



Japan Society

Japan Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies
2017 Annual Meeting

The 36th meeting was held at The Palace Side Hotel in Kyoto from August 4th to 6th. All the papers were given in Japanese with each of the presenters given 1 hour for presentation followed by 45 minutes of discussion centered around a designated respondent.

Friday, August 4th

Session 1 14:00 – 15:45

Presenter: Kazuhiko Yamaki “From Nicholas Kuzanus? to Religious Pluralism and Inclusivism: Focusing on Hick, Descosta?, Driver?”

Session 2 16:00 – 17:45

Presenter: Masako Kita “Faith and Knowledge/Wisdom in Kitaro Nishida”

Saturday, August 5th

General Meeting: 10:30 – 12:00

Session 3: 14:00 – 15:45

Presenter: Sadami Takayama “Conversion in Paul and Shinran: From the Perspective of Faith and Knowledge/Wisdom”

Session 4: 16:00 – 17:45

Presenter: Yukata Tanaka “Conversion in Paul and Shinran: From the Perspective of Faith and Knowledge/Wisdom”

Dinner Reception: 18:30 – 21:00

Sunday, August 6th

General Discussion and Dialogue: 10:00 – 12:00

Board of Directors Meeting: 12:30 – 14:00

Submitted by Kenneth Tanaka
Musashino University, Tokyo



Ling Jiou Mountain Buddhist Society's New International Center in Manhattan

Master Hsin Tao, founder of the ground-breaking Museum of World Religions in Taiwan and of the Global Family of Love and Peace (with consultative status at the U.N. Economic and Social Council), plans to make New York City an international headquarters for his many projects around the world. Strategically located on E. 60th St, Manhattan, the new center will be in easy reach of several distinguished universities, of world-class museums, and of prominent religious institutions, enabling both the teaching of the Buddhist Dharma and the practice of interfaith dialogue. The newly purchased building is now undergoing appropriate remodeling: there will be a shrine room, meditation hall, conference rooms, a library, and offices. Ven. Guang Guo, as director of both the Ling Jiou Shan Center in Bayside, Queens, and the new operations in Manhattan, continues to inspire by sheer force of her Vajra-hearted commitment and determination. The Manhattan Center is scheduled to open in 2018: the opening date will be widely announced.

–Dr. Robert Magliola, Interfaith consultant and retreatant, Ling Jiou Shan, N.Y.



2018 Parliament of the World's Religions

SBCS's new vice president, Leo Lefebure, is encouraging us to consider involvement in the upcoming (November 2018) Parliament of the World's Religions in Toronto.

The proposal submission deadlines are set for March of 2018. If you have ideas or suggestions for collaboration you could contact Leo. The call is up here:

<http://mailchi.mp/parliamentofreligions/h6xegxgc u5-481785?e=01e34c022c>



DMin in Interreligious Chaplaincy/ Workshops in Buddhist Spiritual Care

Buddhist-Christian Studies 2017

The 2017 issue is out and should be in mailboxes next month. To receive the journal, update your membership or subscribe.

The Journal Editors normally receive submissions until October 1 for the subsequent year.

Pamela Ayo Yetunde, Th.D. has joined the faculty at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities to teach pastoral care and counseling and direct their Interreligious Chaplaincy program. United will launch a new D.Min. in Interreligious Chaplaincy and two workshops in Buddhist spiritual care. For more information contact Ayo at payetunde@unitedseminary.edu.



Streng Prize 2017

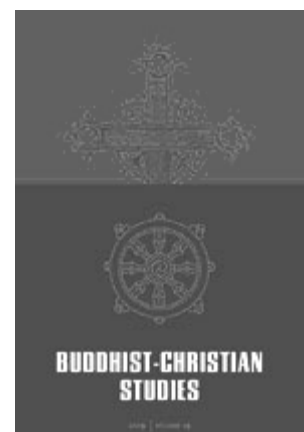
The Committee elected not to award the prize this year. Nominations are welcome for next year.

To Nominate a Book for the Streng Prize

The book must have been published within the last five years. 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 Abraham Vélez de Cea (abraham.velez@eku.edu), who will respond to all nominations.

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.





Membership & Website

If you haven't renewed for 2017, please do so now. Membership includes our newsletters, our journal, and other benefits. [You can renew via our website.](#)

Visit our 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

CONTRIBUTE A REPORT 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 spring issue is March 15.

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.

SOCIETY FOR BUDDHIST-CHRISTIAN STUDIES NEWSLETTER

Jonathan A. Seitz
Editor SBCS Newsletter
Xinyi Road, Section 4, #33 (3fl)
Taipei, TAIWAN