

News of the Society

Greetings from the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies! The fall newsletter contains important information about the society and its activities. (Check out our [website](#), [blog](#), or [facebook](#) page).



In this issue please find:

- Information about the Annual Meeting of the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies
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- Membership, contribution, and other contact info



**A Note from Our President about the
American Academy of Religion Conference &
Annual Business Meeting**

Dear Colleagues,

Because of the resurgence of the covid-19 pandemic and the dangers of traveling and meeting in person, the leaders of the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies have decided to hold our annual meetings online this year. We will present our academic sessions, which have been organized by our vice president, Mark Unno, in collaboration with the American Academy of Religion. Participants need to register for the convention of the AAR, and the AAR will then provide access to these panels, which will meet at the originally scheduled times: on Friday, Nov. 19 from 4:00 to 6:30 PM US/Canada Central Time (5:00 to 7:30 PM Eastern), and on Saturday,

Nov. 20 from 9:00 AM to noon US/Canada Central Time (10:00 AM to 1:00 PM Eastern).

In order to facilitate attendance from all our members, our annual business meeting will be separate from the AAR, on Friday, Nov. 19 from 10:30 to 11:00 AM Central Time (11:30 AM to noon Eastern). During this business meeting, we will present our annual book award, vote on nominations to our board of governors, and welcome ideas for future programs of our society.

The link for joining this meeting may be found below. I regret that we will not be able to meet in person this year. I hope to see you at our annual business meeting, and I hope you all stay safe and healthy.

Palms together,
Leo Lefebure
President of SBCS

Topic: 2021 Business Meeting of the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies

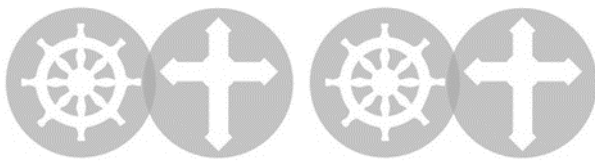
Time: Nov 19, 2021, at 11:30 AM Eastern Time

<https://georgetown.zoom.us/j/98904372642>

Meeting ID: 989 0437 2642

Find your local number:

<https://georgetown.zoom.us/j/aep604JCbM>



**The Annual Meeting of the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies
In Conjunction with the American Academy of Religion
San Antonio, November 2021**

**Friday, Nov. 19, from 4:00 to 6:30 PM (CST)
Buddhist-Christian Responses to Ecological Catastrophe and Climate Change**

Ten of the warmest years globally have occurred since 1998, the arctic has lost 95% of its oldest ice, 6 of 10 of the largest wildfires in California occurred in 2020, and the march goes on. As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports, "It is therefore no longer a question of whether to mitigate climate change or to adapt to it. Both adaptation and mitigation are now essential." This paper session explores Buddhist and Christian responses to climate change in terms of both adaptation and mitigation. What kinds of responses can be formulated in terms of religious thought, scientific understanding, environmental activism, and community building?

PRESENTERS:

Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas

margaretbj@revivingcreation.org

Missioner for Creation Care, Episcopal Diocese of Western Mass. & Southern New England Conference, UCC

Dr. Xiumei Pu xpu@westminstercollege.edu

Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies
Westminster College

Dr. John Becker john.becker@lyon.edu

Assistant Professor of Philosophy
Lyon College

Dr. Stephanie Kaza skaza@uvm.edu

Professor Emerita, Environmental Studies
University of Vermont

INTRODUCED AND MODERATED BY

Kristin Largen klargen@wartburgseminary.edu

President

Wartburg Seminary

Saturday, Nov.20, from 9:00 AM to Noon (CST)

Buddhist-Christian Reflections on Nationalism

In the past few years, the international world has witnessed the rise of religio-ethno-nationalism. This has not been a singular event but occurred simultaneously in many countries with the rise of populism and authoritarian nationalist rulers worldwide. What should we make of counter-response movements such as Black Lives Matter? In what ways have Buddhists and Christians resisted as well as been implicated in the rise of nationalism around the globe? What resources are available to Buddhists and Christians in responding to problematic nationalism?

PRESENTERS:

Dr. Neena Mahadev

neena.mahadev@yale-nus.edu.sg

Assistant Professor of Anthropology
Yale-National University of Singapore

Dr. Kunihiro Terasawa

kunihiro.terasawa@wartburg.edu

Associate Professor of Religion
Wartburg College

Dr. Raquel Bouso Garcia raquel.bouso@upf.edu

Senior Lecturer, Department of Humanities
Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Dr. Michael Masatsugu

MMasatsugu@towson.edu

Associate Professor and Director of American
Studies, Towson University

INTRODUCED AND MODERATED BY

Ruben Habito rhabito@mail.smu.edu

Professor of World Religions
Southern Methodist University



**The Japan Society for Buddhist-Christian
Studies: Report on the 39th Annual Meeting
August 18-19, 2021**

Kunihiro Terasawa

International Advisor of East Asia for SBCS

Associate Professor of Religion

Wartburg College

[\(kunihiro.terasawa@wartburg.edu\)](mailto:kunihiro.terasawa@wartburg.edu)

The 2021 annual conference of the Japan Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies was held online by Zoom. Five presentations were given on the theme of "Religion and Literature."

August 18 (Three Presentations)

First, President of the Japan-SBCS and professor emeritus at Sophia University, Yutaka Tanaka, presented "Hosokawa Garasha (Gracia)," which was about a *Kirishitan* (Christian) woman martyr in the 16th century (1563-1600 CE) in Japan. Garasha was a wife of the feudal lord Hosokawa in Kyushu. The enemy attacked Garasha's castle. Instead of being killed by enemies, for the sake of honor, she chose to be killed by ritual suicide by her own vassals. Garasha's servants wanted to die with her according to tradition, but she let them run away. The servants testified about her death to Jesuit missionaries. According to the missionaries, Garasha chose to be killed by her vassals because it was honorable as the wife of Lord Hosokawa. If she would have chosen to run away, her husband would have become anti-Christian, persecuting missionaries and believers. In this way, she became a martyr. According to missionaries, Garasha always loved reading the *Imitatio Christi* longing for the experience of Christ's cross.

Tanaka explained the story of Garasha was spread in the 16-17th century Europe through Jesuit missionaries. This story was composed to become an opera of *Mulier Fortis* (a brave lady) and played at the palace of Vienna in 1698.

Second, Kunihiro Terasawa, an associate professor at Wartburg College, presented about his research in South Korea and Hong Kong during his sabbatical in 2019-20. Terasawa's research project was titled "Interreligious/Transnational Solidarity of Religion as Resistance to Ultranationalist Populism in East Asia and Pacific Rim." In South Korea, he was a visiting professor at Sogang University, a Jesuit college, focused on how reconciliation could be possible between Korea and Japan through

Buddhist-Christian dialogue. Terasawa visited churches, temples, Christian/Buddhist universities, and Seoul National University for discussions with youth and scholars, and presented four times during his time. He also interviewed comfort women and visited the Sodeomon prison that the Japanese' occupation government built. Terasawa was eventually interviewed by a national daily newspaper for their piece, titled, 'The improvement of Korea-Japan relationship through repentance and forgiveness.'

Terasawa was also a visiting professor at Hang Seng University of Hong Kong and taught a course on 'Asian Religions and Society.' Terasawa interviewed students, scholars, and religious leaders, and found that many Christians students are involved in democratic movements. However, it has not been easy to create solidarity between Christianity and Buddhism for democratic movements. Hong Kong Buddhists have had resentment towards Christianity due to the British Hong Kong government's leniency toward Christianity. The Buddhists, therefore, are more inclined to support the current Hong Kong government backed by the Chinese Communist government. The Buddhists appear to be politically indifferent, focusing on inner mindfulness or meditations. Thus, Hong Kong students and professors are focused less on past resentments and more on the future, and thus are vital in creating solidarity among Christians, Buddhists, and Muslims for democracy and human rights.

Third, Yoshio Tsuruoka, a professor emeritus at Tokyo University, presented "How to read the poems of St. John the Cross with reference to the 'language' philosophy of Shizuteru Ueda." Ueda was a professor at Kyoto University, specializing in the philosophies of Nishida Kitaro and Meister Eckhart. Tsuruoka explained St. John the Cross's journey, most notably, how he

became a mystic in his relation to Teresa de Ávila and ended up writing poems during his confinement time. His poems are 'songs of love,' 'dark night,' and 'fire of love,' and symbolize the romantic relationship between lover and loved without particular nouns. This love relationship of 'I'-'Thou' implies his love relationship with God. Tsuruoka explored the love language of 'I'-'Thou' of John the Cross which indicates the essence of language. Language is not just a written word or descriptive one, but an utterance from a human subject of person to the 'other' person in relationship. That is why it can be sung from the one to another. Thus, Tsuruoka emphasized the 'pure experience' of love and union in John the Cross's poems before it became a distinctive language by using an analogy to Ueda's Zen view of the 'ultimate word of non- word.'

August 19 (Two Presentations)

First, Katsumi Takahashi, a former research fellow of Nanzan Institute, presented his paper, "The Need of Paradigm Shift by Middle Voice beyond Dichotomy of Active Voice and Passive Voice: understanding of *lemma* as event dynamics of oneness of the subject and the object beyond *logos* – objectification of things as separating from the subject." The point could be exemplified, according to a typical logical view; when a person (the subject) rides a bicycle (the object), the person uses the bicycle (active voice), as well as the bicycle is used by the person (passive voice). However, according to Takahashi, the middle voice is supposed to say that the person becomes the place (*topos*) wherein the person becomes one with the bicycle as a dynamic event, - *lemma*. It is not that the person (the subject) controls the bicycle (the object) as a thing, according to *logos*. Takahashi says that the grammar of the middle voice died out in the West. The dualistic logic of the subject controlling the object became the dominant thought, even in Christianity. God is

the object of one's belief or thinking. The middle voice would say that the person becomes the place (*topos*) wherein the person becomes one with God without dichotomy between believer and believed. Christian mysticism such as Meister Eckhart had the middle voice, however, these ideas were rejected as heresy. But Buddhism or Eastern philosophy are still bounded by the middle voices. Nishida Kitarō developed the middle voice philosophy of the *Place (topos) of Absolute Nothingness*. Takahashi laments that the Christian population is still less than one percent of the Japanese population since the logic of active or passive voices of Western Christianity is not working in Japan. Takahashi proposes that Christianity has to be renewed or reconstructed by the middle voice in Japan.

Second, Masako Keta, a professor emeritus at Kyoto University, presented "History of The Japan Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies and the Future." The Japan Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies was originally established as a branch of the East-West Religion Project founded by the University of Hawaii in 1980 and later changed to the current name in 1986. This was already affiliated with the Society of Buddhist-Christian Studies in North America. The Japan Society focused on four themes in the beginning:

- 1) the thinkers or persons who had engaged in Buddhist-Christian dialogues.
- 2) Buddhist-Christian dialogue through which one can learn different religion from one another but not in terms of general studies, but rather, more specialized research projects.
- 3) The foundation of philosophies of religion through which Buddhist-Christian dialogue can be philosophically enhanced. This was the Kyoto School philosophy of Nishida Kitarō.

- 4) Common critical issues or themes for Buddhist-Christian dialogue.

As a result, four problems have been issues.

- 1) Christians were more active and burdened by many administrative works whereas Buddhists were more passive.
- 2) Due to current critical situations in the world, dialogue with other religions such as Islam, or dialogue with secularists are needed more than Buddhist-Christian dialogue.
- 3) The needs of interreligious dialogue for solving conflicts among different religions have declined because each religion itself has more intense divisions and struggles.
- 4) The foundations of the philosophy of religion such as the Kyoto School may be no longer necessary in the current generation.

Moreover, there are a lot of generation gaps in Buddhist-Christian dialogue and interreligious dialogue themselves. Since the current board members are quite old, the new generational needs cannot be understood. A generational change of the board members would be necessary.

After these, we reflected on the five presentations and shared each vision and hope for the future of The Japan Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies. Terasawa also reported the North America Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies' plans and contents at AAR in November 2021.



13th Conference of the European Network of Buddhist-Christian Studies (in Cooperation with the University of Salzburg):

Euro-Buddhism and the Role of Christianity

St. Virgil, Salzburg, Austria, 30 June - 4 July 2022

Since the late 19th/early 20th century Buddhism began to be practiced in Europe and was often presented by its European followers as a persuasive alternative to Christianity which had come under heavy attack from various sides.

Buddhism in Europe was less a result of missionary activities from Asian countries but arose, to a significant extent, out of the propagation by Europeans who studied Buddhism through various literary sources. However, European Buddhists sought connections to Asian countries from a comparatively early stage onwards, and organizations such as the Mahābodhi Society came to play an important role. Tensions between Buddhism and Christianity in the West's Asian colonies and the critique of Christianity in the West had their reciprocal impact on each other.

Whereas in the early days of European Buddhism the focus was predominantly on Theravāda, after the Second World War Western interest shifted to Japanese Zen Buddhism and, somewhat later, to Tibetan Buddhism. Increasingly also other forms of Buddhism (such as Pure Land or Nichiren Buddhism) became present in Europe. Immigrants from Asian countries such as Thailand and Vietnam brought along their local forms of Buddhism and established their own

centers. While some of these immigrant communities kept largely to themselves, other forms of Asian Buddhism, as for example "Inter-Being", opened their home traditions and adopted distinctly European and even Christian elements. Today, then, Buddhism in Europe exists in a large variety of forms and with different degrees of individual belonging and/or commitment. Nowhere in Asia are so many different types of Buddhisms present in one particular society as is now the case in a number of European countries.

Registration is now open through the Network's website. Please visit: <http://buddhist-christian-studies.org/salzburg2022>

The papers of the ENBCS's last conference have now been published with EOS-Editions as "A Visionary Approach. Lynn A. de Silva and the Prospects for Buddhist-Christian Encounter", edited by Elizabeth J. Harris and Perry Schmidt-Leukel. For contents and orders see here:

<https://eos-verlag.de/a-visionary-approach/>

Perry Schmidt-Leukel

ENBCS-President



Dynamic Encounters between Buddhism and the West Report

Laura Langone and Alexandra S. Ilieva

The following is a summary of the 2021 Postgraduate Conference titled "Dynamic Encounters between Buddhism and the West", which took place online on the 28 and 29 of June. The conference was conceptualized, organized, and run by three AHRC funded PhD students at the University of Cambridge: Laura

Langone (Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages); Alexandra S. Ilieva (Faculty of Divinity); and Harry Harland (Faculty of Law). The conference took place over two days and featured 18 presenters across six panels, and two keynote speakers. There were speakers from 4 continents (Europe, North America, Asia, and Oceania). A wide range of topics in multiple fields was discussed: religious studies, neuroscience, art history, politics, philosophy, literature, philology, mathematics, art, and music. Each day consisted of three panels, each with three presentations, one keynote presentation and a networking session. The keynote speakers were Prof. Albrecht Classen (The University of Arizona) and Prof. Graham Parkes (University of Vienna).

Prof. Classen opened the conference with his presentation. He taught us that we have been globalized and transcultural since at least the Middle Ages. To support this claim he provided us with ample evidence of Buddhist-Western exchanges in Art and Literature dotted throughout the literature and architecture of Europe. Prof. Parkes observed that following Zen Master Dōgen's thought as well as Nietzsche's philosophy we can develop a saner approach to the environment, which provides us with resources to help us to tackle the challenges of the climate crisis.

Our first panel was titled "Hellenistic-Buddhist Encounters", which followed on nicely from Prof. Classen's thesis that encounters between Buddhism and the West have been ubiquitous and have dated as far back as the Hellenistic period. Our second panel, "Encounters with the Contemporary World", were impressive examples of intercultural philosophy. Each participant demonstrated a unique ability to bring Buddhist ideas into dialogue with contemporary Western philosophy, specifically ethics, philosophy of mathematics, and epistemology. The third panel, titled "Therapeutic Encounters", taught us of the therapeutic value of Buddhist meditation and philosophical inquiry. As our presenters emphasized, this therapeutic value is not just an ancient artifact to be studied anthropologically,

but a relevant and applicable approach to the modern idea of wellbeing that therefore deserves continued scholarship.

On the second day, we started with our fourth panel called "Encounters through Western Conceptual Lenses", which among others gave us insight into the reception of Japanese Buddhism by the German liberal protestants of the 19th century. Our fifth panel— "Encounters with German Philosophy" — was an excellent example of contemporary comparative work between Buddhist philosophy, ethics, and logic, and the German thinkers Hegel and Nietzsche. We learned that Nietzsche labelled Buddhism as nihilism -- a position that can be challenged through Ambedkar's reading of Buddhism. On the other hand, despite Nietzsche's criticism of Buddhism, striking similarities between his approach to life and that of Mahāyāna Buddhism can be found, both elaborating a life-affirming philosophy. We also became familiar with similarities and differences between the logic of Nishida and Hegel. Finally, our last panel, "Literary and Artistic Encounters" made for a fitting conclusion, reminding us that Buddhist-Western encounters are ongoing, not just politically and intellectually, but also in art, music, and literature. These encounters are dynamic in nature and fundamentally lacking in an essential core. Instead, they are entities that echo through the ages allowing for reinterpretation and reintegration across geographic and temporal scopes.

Both during and after the conference we received extremely positive feedback from the participants. The level of participation and enthusiasm was highly promising, showing that the future of intercultural studies of this sort is bright. Graduate conferences like this are key for early career scholars to set up networks and find likeminded peers to engage in ongoing dynamic encounters.

In conclusion, this conference served to highlight the sophisticated emerging scholarship taking place that seeks to investigate Buddhist-Western interactions and dialogue. But, perhaps more importantly,

the conference itself makes a meta-point: not only has the world been transcultural for many centuries, but the conference itself and in particular the global spatial locations of the participants – stretching from Sri Lanka to California - proved it continues to be as dynamic and intercultural as ever. Indeed, we hope such a conference further serves as an example of the kinds of venues and opportunities that need to be created and supported for young scholars to share their research, receive peer-feedback, expand their knowledge and skills, and network beyond the siloes of just national or continental discourse.

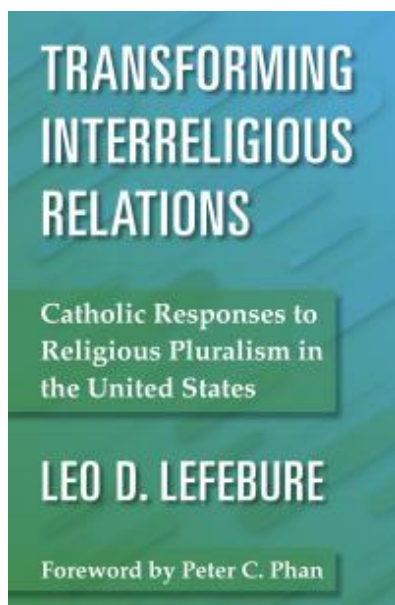


Laudatory Note: Dr. Leo Lefebure

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of all of us in SBCS, I would like to congratulate our president, Leo Lefebure, on his book, *Transforming Interreligious Relations: Catholic Responses to Religious Pluralism in the US* (Orbis Books, 2020), on receiving the First Place Award in the category of Ecumenism and Interreligious Relations by the Catholic Media Association (CMA).

A hearty congratulations, Leo!



Call for Submissions: Journal for Buddhist Christian Studies

The *Journal for Buddhist Christian Studies* invites submissions on the following topics for the 2022 issue of the journal. The first topic is the natural world/creation and environmental concerns. We welcome submissions that describe a specific doctrine or practice from either Buddhism or Christianity that informs a particular understanding of creation/the natural world, and a connection with an analogous doctrine from the other tradition. Similarly, we welcome submissions on a doctrine or practice that relates specifically to environmental concerns, climate change or climate care. The second topic relates to the first but focuses specifically on human bodies. We welcome submissions on the role of the physical body in a Buddhist or Christian understanding of what it means to be human, and how that particular interpretation of the body relates to some aspect of the other tradition. Submissions that engage both Buddhism and Christianity are preferred, although strong submissions that treat only Buddhism or Christianity will also be considered.

Submissions should be between 6,000 and 8,000 words, and should be emailed to Thomas Cattoi (tcattoi@scu.edu) and Kristin Johnston Largen (klargen@wartburgseminary.edu).

Deadline for submissions is Feb. 28, 2022.

Thomas Cattoi and Kristin Largen
Co-editors
Journal for Buddhist Christian Studies

Membership



If you haven't renewed for 2021, please do so now. Membership includes our newsletters, our journal, and other benefits. [You can renew via our website.](#)

Some of you have asked about how membership works. Here is a brief Question & Answer.

What are current dues?

Dues range from \$10 for students to \$25 for Adjunct Professors, Independent Scholars, and Assistant Professors and \$45 for Associate and Full Professors.

What are the terms of membership?

You may join or renew at any point during the calendar year, although it is more convenient to join at the start. Membership is for the current year (2020), but regardless of when you join you receive the same benefits for that year.

What is included in annual membership?

All memberships include an annual print copy of *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, inclusion on our email list (two e-newsletters), and voting rights in member meetings.

How does membership contribute to broader Buddhist-Christian cooperation?

Our dues support a variety of recent efforts. We have worked to make the Journal more easily available, have added to our webpage (for instance, it includes the last 12+ years of newsletters), and continue to work on ways to connect scholars.

Write for us! (Submitting a Blog Post)

A long-term goal in SBCS has been to offer community members a chance to interact and

share news, opinions, and resources via our updated and improved website. We are looking for blog posts on a variety of topics:

- News updates about conferences, events, courses, or other resources
- Topical discussions of important issues
- Posts about pedagogy, teaching, syllabus development, creative exercises, or other topics
- Interviews, samples, or reviews of SBCS member books

Blog posts are vetted by our social media committee and will appear on the website.

Typically, we will also post the blog to our Facebook page; we may ask for permission to use it elsewhere. An ideal post:

- Engages the intersection of Buddhist and Christian traditions
- Is approximately 800 words in length
- Includes an image
- Offers a short bio of the author (25-50 words) and contact info

Please visit our blog for more information:

<https://www.society-buddhist-christian-studies.org/about-the-blog>

Also, check out our Facebook page and give it a like:

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

To Nominate a book for the Streng Award

The book must have been published within the last five years. Nominations can be made by any person using the [online form](#). The completed form may be sent electronically to Paul Ingram, (poingram@comcast.net), who will respond to all nominations.

Nominations are now welcomed. 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.

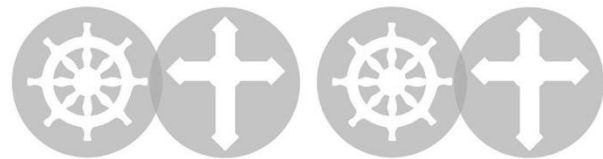
CONTRIBUTE A REPORT TO THE NEWSLETTER

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 and reports on major figures in the field of Buddhist-Christian Studies.

We are always grateful for information, news, or other submissions that members and others can share with the Society. Submissions may be edited for clarity and length. Send items to newsletter editor John.Becker@lyon.edu.



SOCIETY FOR BUDDHIST-CHRISTIAN STUDIES NEWSLETTER

Editor: John Becker
john.becker@lyon.edu