

# Society for Buddhist- Christian Studies



Vol. 55

Spring 2015

## *News of the Society*

### In this Newsletter

Greetings from the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies!

In this newsletter you will find:

- An in-depth summary of our November 2014 annual meeting in San Diego.
- Updates on our journal, *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, including information from Carol Anderson and Thomas Cattoi on paper submissions.
- Calls for nominations for our book prize.
- Recent and upcoming conferences and retreats.
- How to update membership status.

Thank you again for your participation in the Society. *Newsletter Editor*

### **2014 SBCS Annual Meeting San Diego, California, USA November 21-22, 2014**

Sandra Kunz, SBCS Secretary

The Annual Meeting is an opportunity to meet, reconnect, and share our work. As a "Related Scholarly Organization" of the American Academy of Religion, the Society for Buddhist-Studies holds its meetings concurrently with the AAR's national conference. The SBCS normally organizes two panels and holds board and members meetings. This year's panels were "Liberation Theology and Engaged Buddhism: Challenging Each Other, Learning from Each Other," and "Old Buddhist Texts: New Womanist Thought." The papers from panels are often published in the journal.

### **Board Meeting (Officer and Committee Reports)**

The Society's annual board meeting was held on Friday, November 21 and its members meeting was held on Sunday Nov. 23. The 2013 minutes submitted by Sandra Kunz and Denise Yarbrough's treasurer's report were approved. Editor Jonathan Seitz's newsletter report was read in absentia as was Rita Gross's journal co-editor Terry Muck's journal report. An extended discussion treated the relationship between the society, the journal, and the University of Hawaii Press. The board voted to continue publishing with UHP while working out a new memorandum of understanding. Thomas Cattoi and Carol Anderson were enthusiastically approved as journal co-editors. Book review editor Sid Brown requested suggestions for books to review.

The Nominating Committee reported that the governing board terms of Yifa and John Makransky end with this board meeting. John remains on the board as vice president. We discussed nominees for these two board positions.

The Streng Book Award Committee strongly requested nominations. Chairman J. Abraham Vélez de Cea was elected to another term and Thomas Hastings joined the committee.

Karen Enriquez reported for the Graduate Student Award Committee noting that although a good paper was selected this year, the problem of paper quality remains. Rita Gross suggested that members with students working in Buddhist-Christian studies should encourage them to present papers at regional AAR meetings and submit these to the award committee. Judith Simmer-Brown suggested we start a subsidiary online journal. that would publish, among other things, commentaries recent *BCS* articles, including grad student commentaries. John Makransky suggested we publish and invite commentary on “classic” *BCS* articles, too, and moved that we discontinue the oral presentation of graduate student award papers. Judith seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. We are thus not currently accepting nominations for the graduate student award but anticipate a future call.

John later moved and Judith seconded a motion that the board charge Karen, Glenn Willis, and Sarah Swenson to develop a proposal by March for a website that would host a subsidiary, peer-reviewed online journal, being sure to articulate how this could promote the society among younger scholars. It passed unanimously.

During the Membership Committee report discussion, John Makransky reminded us of Jonathan Seitz’s list of past members and suggested we out a membership mailing to them. Sarah Swenson and Alice Keefe were charged with creating a comprehensive distribution list and sending out a mailing asking everyone to join or rejoin, or to renew membership.

Social Media and Website Committee. In light of our proposal to start a subsidiary online journal, Judith Simmer-Brown was gratefully charged with chairing a new committee with David Gardiner and with Glenn

Willis, who has been handling Facebook publicity. They will get bids for hiring a professional website designer who can reconfigure it in such a way that we could maintain it ourselves.

Program Committee. John Makransky reported briefly on the potential session topics suggested at the lunch meeting. We discussed pros and cons of forming panels of known experts and using AAR’s blind submission process. The discussion ended with general exhortation to scout out scholars with pertinent work to enlarge our pool of presenters.

We briefly discussed the pros and cons of organizing an international conference and reviving and regularizing the international advisor positions. Several names were suggested. Alice Keefe volunteered to come up with an amendment to the bylaws that would clarify the role of international advisors.

### Members Meeting

President Alice Keefe called us to order. She first announced that this year’s Streng Book Award goes to John Ross Carter for *In the Company of Friends: Exploring Faith and Understanding with Buddhists and Christians* published by SUNY Press in 2013.

She presented the slate to fill the board seats left vacant since the terms of John Makransky and Yifa had expired. Sandra Kunz moved that Glenn Willis and Ruben Habito be approved and Karen Enriquez seconded. They were elected unanimously.

Alice also announced that Carol Anderson and Thomas Cattoi had been nominated as co-editors of the journal. Rita Gross moved that they be approved, John Makransky seconded, and they were unanimously appointed.

In a brief review of highlights of the board meeting, Alice noted that a committee would be working on a proposal for a peer-reviewed, online journal that would serve as subsidiary to *BCS* and offer a forum for commentary on its articles. She also reported that the board would be clarifying and strengthening the roles of international advisors from sister societies in Europe and Asia. Members were reminded to contact vice-president John Makransky with panel suggestions.

Rita Gross moved that we adjourn and Carol Anderson seconded. We did at 11:29, perhaps setting a society record for clear and simple speech.

### Later Updates

A board member shares that “the website is being completely renovated and redesigned from the ground up, including a new logo. It will have much of the same content, with some new, updated features, including greater ease in renewing our memberships online. We will be soliciting recent photos and bios of current Board members, and would love any high resolution photos from our meetings, recent or otherwise. The website designer is Alicia Brown, who is a graduate of Rhode Island School of Design and a website designer, from Brattleboro, VT.”



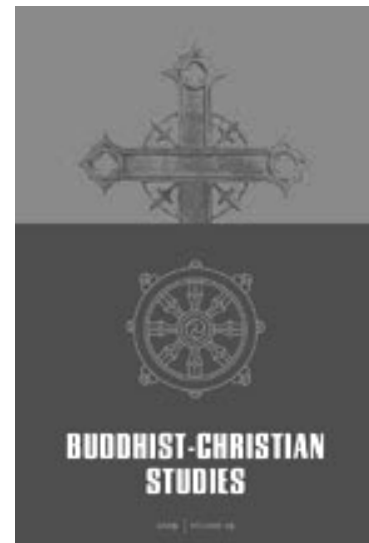
### *Buddhist-Christian Studies Updates*

From Our New Editors  
Carol Anderson and Thomas Cattoi

The Buddhist-Christian Studies journal has successfully been passed on to its new editors, Thomas Cattoi and Carol Anderson. We arrive at the common ground of Buddhist Christian studies from rather different trajectories.

Thomas is Associate Professor of Christology and Cultures the Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University, Berkeley, California. early Christian theology and spirituality, with a special emphasis on the Vajrayāna tradition and the Greek. He is the author of *Divine Contingency: Theologies of Divine Embodiment in Maximus the Confessor and Tsong kha pa* (Gorgias Press, 2009) and *Theodore the Studite: Writings on Iconoclasm* (Paulist Press, 2014), as well as the co-editor of *Perceiving the Divine Through the Human Body: Mystical Sensuality* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) and *Death, Dying and Mysticism: The Ecstasy of the End* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

Carol is Professor of Religion at Kalamazoo College in Kalamazoo, Michigan, with a specialty in Theravāda Buddhism and feminist studies in religion, with a focus on the Pāli canon and commentaries. She is the author of *Pain and its Ending: The Four Noble Truths in the Theravāda Canon* (Curzon Books, 1999) and is co-editor of *Embedded Languages: Studies in the Religion, Culture, and History of Sri Lanka* (Godage Books, 2012). Her recent work explores Buddhist constructions of gender and sexuality in the Pāli canon and commentaries.



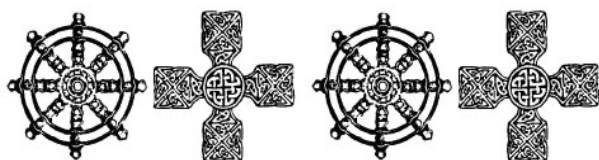
Our transition has been a relatively smooth one, insofar as we have been mentored by the previous editors, Rita Gross and Terry Muck. We would like to offer our heartfelt “thanks” for their willingness to answer our e-mails and offer their advice as we take up the editorial reins. We also thank Sid Brown and Jonathan Seitz for their work on the Book Reviews and the News and Views.

An excerpt from our remarks for the 2015 issue sets the stage for our work with the Journal:

“Fifteen years into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and thirty-four years after the publication of its first issue, where does this transformed academic and cultural landscape leave a journal like *Buddhist-Christian Studies*? The dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity is now part and parcel of the broad academic conversation in the fields of interreligious studies and comparative theology, as attested by the ongoing popularity –and growing number– of interest groups at professional organizations such as the American Academy of Religion or the Catholic

Theological Society of America. The Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies in North America and the European Network of Buddhist Christian Studies in Europe continue to foster academic conversation and exchange, and as attested by this year's News and Views, the emergence of religious studies and interreligious dialogue in the Chinese academic world continues to be a promising development. Indeed, the conversation does not only take place at a speculative or theoretical level; in an international context simultaneously marked by increasing secularism and religious violence, Buddhism and Christianity offer a locus of resistance to a world where economic instability and intensifying climate change contribute to what is a *de facto* globalization of insecurity. At the same time, recent work in post-colonial approaches to the comparative study of religion have begun to impact religious dialogue by drawing attention to the history of the terms and assumptions that frame our questions. The journal hopes to continue to play an important role in bringing together some of the more important voices and contributions to this ongoing conversation, and sharing them with the broader academic community."

We look forward to nurturing the journal in the years ahead. As has been the usual practice of the Journal, we will continue to solicit articles and papers from the panels and presentations at the Society's Annual Meeting that is held in conjunction with the American Academy of Religion meetings. We also welcome submissions from scholars in the field. If you have any questions about the Journal, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thomas Cattoi's e-mail is [tcattoi@jstb.edu](mailto:tcattoi@jstb.edu), and Carol Anderson can be reached at [anderson@kzoo.edu](mailto:anderson@kzoo.edu).



### 2015 Streng Award Call for Nominations

The Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies is now accepting nominations for the 2015 Frederick Streng Book Award for Excellence in Buddhist-Christian Studies. Nominations must be received by Dec. 31, 2015. The winner will be announced at the annual meeting of the Society.

The criteria for nominating and making the award are:

1. The subject matter of the book should be inspired by and relevant to Buddhist-Christian relations, but subject matter is not narrowly limited to books on dialogue or to books that are half on Christianity and half on Buddhism.
2. The scholarship must be original and the writing clear. The book must make an important contribution to issues relevant to the context of Buddhist-Christian dialogue.
3. Books can be considered for nomination within five years of their publication date (i.e. the 2015 award must be for a book published in 2010 or later).

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](mailto:abraham.velez@eku.edu)). Abraham will respond to all electric 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.



### Minzu University Conference Report: Buddhist Christian Dialogue and Comparative Scripture Beijing, October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Thomas Cattoi

Minzu University was first established in Beijing in 1952 as the Central Institute for Nationalities. The purpose of this new institution was to provide a place in the People's Republic of China, where non-Han students could pursue higher academic studies. Over the decades, this institution would expand and become one of the leading universities in China in the fields of anthropology, linguistics, and ethnic studies.

Its commitment to cultural diversity goes a long way to explaining why Minzu has also become an important center for the study of religions, with thriving programs in Christian philosophy and Tibetan studies. In 2011, the University established a new Institute of Comparative Scripture and Interreligious Dialogue, whose purpose, in the words of its brochure, is *'to conduct comparative research in the classical or scriptural traditions of the great world religions and to engage in interreligious dialogue'*. *The Institute encourages the scientific studies of texts, but also 'allows for a study of one's own scripture as authoritative Scripture in the context of one's faith community as well as of other faith communities.'*

In the few years since its establishment, thanks to the efforts of Prof. You Bin, Professor of Philosophy and Religion and Director of the Institute, the institute has already been able to organize a number of international conferences. In October 2014, Minzu hosted its first symposium on Buddhist-Christian Dialogue and Comparative Scripture. The purpose of the conversation was to explore the role of the study of sacred texts in the context of Buddhist-Christian dialogue. The proceedings started with a talk by Prof. You Bin on "Comparative Scriptural Studies as an Approach to Doing Biblical Studies in China".

Some of the Chinese speakers offered papers touching on the role of religious practice and interreligious dialogue in public life- a theme that elicits great interest in Chinese academic circles. is discussed with great interest in China today. Dr. Thomas Cattoi – current co-editor of this journal- read a paper on the points of contact and the differences between Origenist spirituality and the worldview of a Tibetan Buddhist text, the Kun-byed rgyal po. Prof. Wu Xuego read an essay on Augustine's *Confessions* from the perspective of Pure Land Buddhist practice. Prof. Rita Gross- former editor of this journal- gave an inspiring presentation on "Living Scriptures: The Women around the Buddha and their Changing Stories", while Peter Schmidt-Leukel offered a Christian reflection on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. Other papers touched topics as varied as the theology of Karl Barth, a comparative reading of the Lotus Sutra, or the contextualization of Christianity in China.

The proceedings of the conference will be published in the *Journal of Comparative Scripture* issued by

Minzu University. More information is available online at <http://www.icsird.org/>



### European Network of Buddhist-Christian Studies

The next conference will take place from 25-29 June, 2015 at St Ottilien on the theme: Buddhist-Christian Relations in Asia. It will examine six countries (China, Japan, Korea, Myanmar (Burma), Sri Lanka and Thailand) and will host speakers from these countries. Visit the [Network's](#) webpage for more information.



### Membership in the SBCS

Last year's efforts to expand our membership have had some promising results. The SBCS owes it strength to the friendships and cooperation of its members. Current members are encouraged to reach out to those who may be interested in participating in the SBCS.

If you have not updated your membership, please do so now. Keeping up to date on membership guarantees you will receive the journal and will be included in all of our mailings.

To enroll as a member of the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies, complete the on-line form on our website <http://society-buddhist-christian-studies.org/appform.html> or contact Glenn Willis to pay by mail:

Glenn Willis [glenn.r.willis@gmail.com](mailto:glenn.r.willis@gmail.com)

Enclose a check for \$45.00 (\$10.00 for students, \$25 for members over 65) 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.

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International money orders in U.S. dollars are acceptable. We also have a paypal account.

Members receive the Society's *Newsletter* and our annual journal *Buddhist-Christian Studies*.



## Contribute Updates 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 fall issue is September 1.

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. All submissions are subject to editing for clarity and length. Send items to Jonathan Seitz [jaseitz@gmail.com](mailto:jaseitz@gmail.com).

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## SOCIETY FOR BUDDHIST- CHRISTIAN STUDIES NEWSLETTER

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