

## NEWS FROM MIDDLEWAY PRESS

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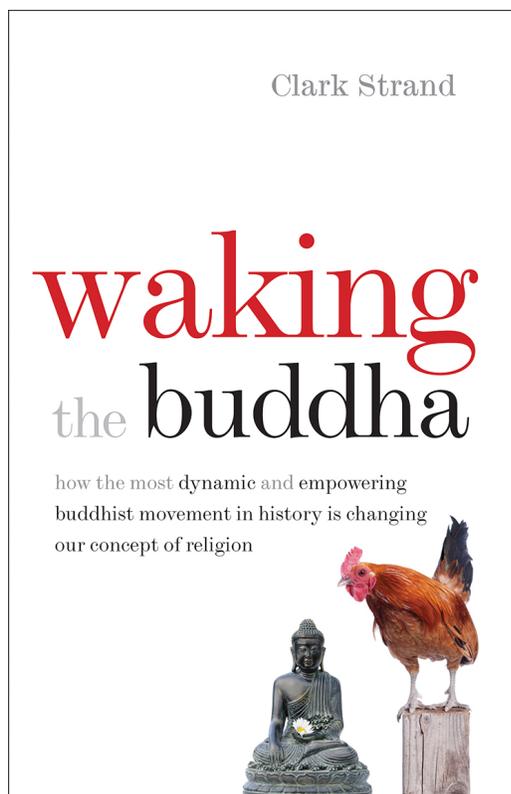
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# Is Religion Out-Dated and Irrelevant?

New Book Highlights One Group That's a Model for Others

(SANTA MONICA, CA) A 2012 Gallup survey reveals what many already sense. More Americans than ever feel religion is too old-fashioned to answer today's problems, just too out of date to be relevant. And a huge majority says that religion is losing its influence on American life.



But there's one group that's bucking the trend, says Clark Strand in his new book *Waking the Buddha: How the Most Dynamic and Empowering Buddhist Movement in History Is Changing Our Concept of Religion*. This group is the Soka Gakkai International, which bases itself on the teachings of Nichiren, the 13<sup>th</sup>-century Japanese Buddhist reformer. And while the group practices Buddhism, it may offer important tips for other religions.

"It's unlike any Buddhist group I've ever encountered," Strand says. "Its meetings are democratic and based on communication rather than meditation. And the goal of the practice is as grounded as they come. Members are encouraged to use Buddhist practice to tackle the immediate problems of daily life."

Strand, a former Zen monk with hundreds of followers, had grown disillusioned with Buddhism because it never seemed to make a lasting difference in his students' lives. They'd come to retreats and feel better but would soon find themselves mired in the same difficulties as before. Then he discovered the SGI.

"As I see it," he writes in *Waking the Buddha*, "the primary difference between the Soka Gakkai and most other contemporary forms of religious worship lies here, in its tradition of openly addressing the challenges to happiness faced by the ordinary individual.... For what that

tradition really offers isn't just a new paradigm for worship for Buddhism but for religion in general. That is because it makes religion answerable to life."

What makes the SGI unique in modern Buddhism? How could it have grown in less than a century from a small Buddhist organization originally comprising only Japanese teachers and educators into a global movement with more than 12 million members? What aspects of the SGI's culture would other religious groups have to adopt or develop if they wanted to move forward as this movement has done? *Waking the Buddha* answers these and many other questions in a book that places the SGI at the leading edge of religion in the 21st century.

### **Author Bio**

Clark Strand is a spiritual writer and former Zen Buddhist monk who previously served as senior editor of the magazine *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*. He is the author of the books *How to Believe in God: Whether You Believe in Religion or Not* and *Meditation Without Gurus* as well as countless groundbreaking articles. He has founded and led spiritual study groups, taught workshops and retreats, lectured at colleges and universities, and spoken at some of the largest Buddhist gatherings ever held in America. He lives in Woodstock, New York.

### **Promotional Plans**

\$50,000 marketing budget. Author tour to New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco and Los Angeles Advertising in *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* and *Living Buddhism*. Dedicated web page, [wakingthebuddha.org](http://wakingthebuddha.org).

### **Specs**

*Waking the Buddha* by Clark Strand

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