



## ABBA

Dickson Kazuo Yagi

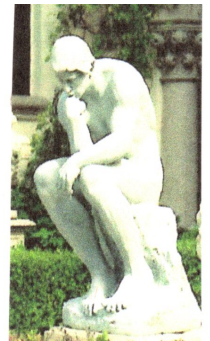
The most common Buddhist scroll of hell has the joys of heaven at the top, with female angels flying in Korean (foreign) dress. Or course, the rest of the scroll paints the many, many forms of human torture in hell. Our eye is caught by the title at the top of the scroll: **Kan Zen Chō Aku** 勧善懲惡

(Promoting Good and Threatening Evil). The artists who made the scroll are not pretending to know the true horrors of hell. They just want to scare the heck out of bad kids so they might behave.

There are humans swimming in a lake of blood (**chi no ike**). Some wretched souls are pierced through in the mountain of needles (**hari no yama**). Some are having their tongues pulled out by wrenches because they were liars. And people are being barbecued on giant skewers rotating above cooking fires. There are other spectacular scenes of torture.

One day my kindergarten son was walking backwards into our living room. I asked why he was walking backwards? He pointed to the hell scroll. He could not bear to look at the scenes of hell. I had pinned the scroll to the wall in preparing for the Buddhism class that met in my house.

Christians have the same idea of heaven and hell. There is Rodin's statue called "**The Thinker**". Many know this "Thinker" statue but do not know what he is thinking about. Actually he is sitting on the top of hell, looking down on all the tortures of the different hells where crowds of people are writhing in pain and misery.



Three and four generations ago the Christian Church was strongly dominated by preaching on hell. A strict God was seen as a Judge or Police. He was bound by rules of justice that could not forgive any sin. Every sin had to be punished or all morality in the universe would collapse. This mean God was counter balanced by Jesus who died for our sins as a substitute (penal substitution). So we had a mean God we feared and a gentle Jesus we loved.

Heaven was blessed with the love of Jesus, and hell was a place of misery. God ruled heaven, but Satan ruled hell. The popular caricature was Satan with a tail in a red suit torturing people with his pitchfork.

But a revolution arose in different layers of the church. Bible scholars found that Jesus called God, "**Abba**." In the Aramaic language spoken by Jesus, Abba was the familiar name for father, full of loving kindness—like "**Daddy**," or "**Papa**." This gentle God as "Papa," was the opposite of God as **Judge/Police** that the church had set up to send sinners to hell.

Gradually the doctrine of hell began to crumble as this new view of God as Abba seeped into the hearts of thinking Christians. This brought up other problems about hell. Satan torturing people in hell with his pitchfork became a problem. The Bible clearly has God in charge of hell, not Satan. God is in charge, and Satan is the victim/prisoner in hell. With God now as Abba, a loving Father, there was nobody to do the torturing in hell. Surely God would not be sticking people with a pitchfork in hell.

Of course, today in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the problem of sin must be more complicated than this childish caricature of hell and a devil in a red suit with a pitchfork. Serious thinking must work through psychological insights of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. This brings us to concepts of the "**conscious and subconscious mind**" in depth psychology. It is amazing that in confessing the sins of ancient Israel, the prophets so long ago prayed also for sins committed "**in ignorance**", "**unintentional sins**", sins below our awareness—**subconscious sins**? The prophets of ancient Israel knew something about depth psychology. (Leviticus 4:12, 5:15; Numbers 15:27.)

Today in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century we are faced with the Coronavirus19 killing off hundreds of thousands. We have climate change with hundreds of wildfires out of control, ozone layers thickening, ice caps and glaciers melting, and ocean levels rising. The richest 1% lives in unbelievable luxury while the middle class struggle and the masses on the bottom earn less than a living wage. Worse than that are the many hundreds of thousands of refugees threatened by war, poverty, disease, gangs, and greedy dictators.

The **Apostle Paul** moved away from God as Judge. He moved from sin and punishment to **"Life in the Spirit"** (Romans 8). The **Disciple John** moved away from God as Judge and promoted **"Life in the love of God"**. (*"Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love."* 1John4:7).

The theme of the Bible's **"progressive revelation"** moves from **punishment to Spirit to Love**. What do you think?

See John Cobb, Jr., **Jesus' Abba: The God Who Has Not Failed**, Fortress Press, 2015.

## THE FAITH OF JESUS

The Greek New Testament speaks of the **"faith of Jesus."** For many centuries the English Bible traditionally has twisted this phrase to fit its theology. That meant I am saved by **"my faith in Jesus."** But a more natural translation for me would be: I am saved by **"Jesus' faith in me."** Grammatically the phrase could be translated either way.

I like the idea of being saved by Jesus' absolute, unwavering, unshakable faith in me, rather than my lukewarm, unpredictable, shaky faith in Jesus. I consciously try to believe 85% of the time, but unconsciously fail to believe at least 15% of the time—or maybe 40% or 60%?

For my first 5 years in Japan, I was less than 50% sure I could safely graduate the 4 year Th.B./Th.M. course of Tokyo Union Seminary. I was born and raised in Hilo, Hawaii. I was learning Greek, Hebrew, and German languages and Japanese theological lectures through the Japanese/Chinese languages. (I got a D in Hebrew taught through Chinese kanji). Japan had adopted the Chinese written language (kanji). Japanese high schools at that time taught 1,850 Chinese characters (tōyō kanji), the backbone of Japanese written language.

How happy our life would have been if I had assured my wife, Ellen, that Jesus who led us to Japan would surely see me graduate safely. But my faith in Jesus was only perhaps 30%. It might be, I thought, that **Jesus wanted me to fail** so I could learn humility. So there was an element of surprise when I safely graduated.

Maybe you believe in Jesus more than I—95% of the time? But I would be so glad if **"faith of Jesus"** meant the unwavering, unshakable faith of Jesus Christ toward me. By Greek grammar, the translation could go either way. What do you think?

A 3<sup>rd</sup> option would be that we are saved by **"the faith of Jesus in God."** See John Cobb, Jr., celebrated Methodist theologian, (David Lull co-author), **Romans: Chalice Commentaries For Today**, 2005, p. 18.

*Rev. Dickson Kazuo Yagi*

Note: In Shin Buddhism the faith of Amida Buddha is not our wavering faith in Amida, but **Amida's unwavering faith toward us (shinjin)**.

Dickson Kazuo Yagi (屋宜和夫) is from Hilo, Hawaii. He graduated from George Washington University (D.C.'59), Tokyo Union Seminary (B.A., Th.M.'65) and So. Baptist Seminary (Th.M., Ph.D., Louisville, '72). At U. of Hawaii he did post-graduate studies in Buddhism under David Kalupahana, David Chappell, and Alfred Bloom.

Dickson taught Christian Theology for 27 years at Seinan Gakuin University in Fukuoka, Japan, where he is Professor Emeritus of Christian Studies. He also taught Intro. to World Religions, Christian Ethics, and a seminar in Buddhist-Christian Studies. He was Head Chaplain of the university, one term. Until retirement he was a member of Tōzai Shūkyō Kōryū Gakkai, one of the highest levels of Buddhist-Christian Dialogue in Japan. Rev. Yagi is a retired minister at Sage Granada Park United Methodist Church in Alhambra, CA. He is retired at Pilgrim Place, Claremont, CA, where he is Chair of the Religions Committee. He can be reached at [dkyagi@icloud.com](mailto:dkyagi@icloud.com)



## DEEP CENTER

### Dr. William Malcomson

I believe that all of us have a deep center. By that I mean that within the center of our being, there is a gathering of all that we are, coming together in one place. This deep center is often called the "soul". I have experienced this in a number of ways. Years ago when I was in Switzerland, I was riding in a Cog Railway. As we came out of the tunnel, I saw the mountains in front of me. The main mountain I saw was the Eiger. At that moment, I felt deeply connected to those mountains.

I call this an awareness of my deep center.

Also, one time we were visiting on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. The sky was clear and you could see millions of stars. Again, I did not feel small, but I felt connected with this beautiful event.

In my lifetime, I have known people with whom I connect on a very deep level. My second wife was that kind of person. Almost as soon as we met, I realized that we were connected in a very deep way. This was true until she died. I also experienced this when a man in our congregation came to visit me. I realized that our deep centers were connected immediately, and that holds true today.

Years ago, I was traveling in Turkey. The tour company sent us to the home of a Turkish couple for lunch. Neither of the couple spoke any English at all. The husband decided to take me around the house to show me what was there. I accompanied him all around the house. He talked to me a lot, but in Turkish. When we got back into the house and we were ready to go, I put my hand on my heart and then put a hand on his heart. My memory is that he did the same. I realized that my deep center could connect with another's, deep center even without speaking the same language.

In the Upanishads, the Hindu sages say that **"brahma is atman"**. What this means is that Atman is just as great as the greatest that can be known. Brahma is like "GOD" in our culture. Atman is usually translated as "Self". I believe that that is a mistranslation. I think that it should be translated as "Soul" or our **"Deep Center"**. The idea being that we are as divine as God is in our deep center and God is as divine as we are.

A question arises as to whether the deep center is eternal. Does it exist after death? My view is that we all have deep centers that are interconnected. But I don't think our center is always individualized. Our SOUL is, in my view, absorbed into the "WORLD SOUL" at death. I have no idea if this is true or not.

Can you find your deep center in Meditation? Many can, but I don't think that is needed. I gave examples earlier of coming into contact with it. May you feel connected to the Deep Center of your Being.

Dr. William Malcomson is retired in Washington State. He was Dean of the American Baptist Seminary of the West, a founder of the School of Theology and Ministry of Seattle University, former President of the Council for Pacific Asian Theology, and former Theologian-in-Residence at Seattle First Baptist Church. He is blessed with two sons, one of whom is a Christian Buddhist, one daughter, and 5 grandchildren. Bill has a Ph.D. from Princeton in World Religions. **He recently suffered a stroke, 2/05/20.** We rejoice in his survival. We pray for his full recovery and his further ministry among us. The source of his wisdom is not religious



## NOTABLE JAPANESE WOMEN

### Phil Shigekuni

Ruth Bader Ginsburg was indeed a remarkable woman who, upon her death, got recognition she deserved. This caused me to remember a few JA women who have made important contributions to our community and have not gotten the recognition they deserve.

On Pearl Harbor Day, Dec. 7, 1941, Mitsuye Endo was working for the Department of Motor Vehicle in California. After being fired, she and her family were sent to Tule Lake. Mitsue filed a habeas corpus suit that eventually went to the Supreme Court.

At one point in the process she was given a release from Tule Lake, but was not allowed return to the West Coast. To continue her case, she chose to transfer to the camp at Topaz, Utah, where she remained until it closed. In December 1944, the Supreme Court finally decided she was "concededly loyal" and allowed her, along with all other Japanese Americans, to return to the West Coast.

For the initiative she took, along with her dogged determination, we need to recognize and honor Mitsuye Endo.

Two year ago, to commemorate her passing, the family of Aiko Herzig Yoshinaga held a memorial celebration of her life at the Japanese American National Museum in L.A. Along with her role as a loving mother, Aiko devoted many hours to JA national organizations including, most notably, the Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) in Washington, D.C. CWRIC was the government's panel organized to conduct hearings in ten cities throughout the country.

Aiko spent countless hours at the National Archives in Washington examining wartime records. Her most significant discovery were papers that revealed actions taken by the government to **alter and hide evidence** that would exonerate men such as Min Yasui, Gordon Hirabayashi and Fred Korematsu. Distinguished attorney and author Peter Irons, who attended Aiko's gathering, worked with attorney Dale Minami and others to gain justice for these men. They were each eventually awarded the Medal of Freedom from three presidents.

We need to recognize and honor Aiko Herzig Yoshinaga.

In 1976, Michi Weglyn published "Years of Infamy." (In reference to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who declared Pearl Harbor Day, Dec. 7, a "Day of Infamy," and who subsequently issued Executive Order 9066, banishing us into concentration camps.) Her book was important in that it was written by someone who had been one of the victims and was thoroughly documented. Then too, it came out prior to JACL's redress resolution in 1978, raising awareness of the issue. Also, Michi told the tragic story of the 2,000+ Peruvians and other South American Japanese who were kidnapped and shipped to concentration camps in the U.S.

Michi was a talented costume designer working on TV's "The Perry Como Show." She received an award for costume design from a national organization. Michi was married to Walter Weglyn, a German Jew who escaped from a Nazi concentration camp.

We need to recognize and honor Michi Weglyn.

Grayce Uyehara was an unheralded hero for redress. Karl Nobuyuki, who served as our San Fernando Valley JACL chapter

president over 20 years ago, was JACL's national director in the '80's when redress was the top issue. He enthusiastically praised Grayce's tireless efforts in Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.

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I read an inspiring interview of Grayce by Densho at a post-redress conference in 1997 at UCLA. After JACL passed the resolution for redress, Grayce, upon the request of Sen. Daniel Inouye, took on the role of unpaid lobbyist. Large sums of money had to be raised to get the word out to the community and the rest of the country. Grayce successfully did this and contributed her own money in the process. Simultaneously, she worked seven days a week to inform our community and connect with members of Congress on behalf of redress.

We need to recognize and honor Grayce Uyehara.

Phil Shigekuni writes from San Fernando Valley and can be contacted at [psbig2000@verizon.net](mailto:psbig2000@verizon.net). He is 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President of CPAT. This essay was first published in **Rafu Shimpo**, the Japanese newspaper in Los Angeles,

Phil Shigekuni was born in San Francisco. He was interned first for six months at the Santa Anita Racetrack, followed by two years at the Amache Concentration Camp in Colorado. After living in Milwaukee for two years during the war, his family moved back to Los Angeles. Phil earned college degrees from Cal State Los Angeles and Cal State Northridge.

Phil and his wife Marion live in Northridge, So. CA. They have two daughters, one in San Francisco and another in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

He serves on the church council at the Chatsworth West United Methodist Church. He served as Civil Rights Chair on the board of the San Fernando Valley Chapter of the Japanese American Citizen's League and later two terms as Chairman.

Phil was counselor at Cleveland High School in Reseda, CA for 33 years. He has been retired for 27 years. He writes a column regularly in the Rafu Shimpo, largest Japanese newspaper in So. CA.

## THE BEHEADING OF SAMUEL PATY

Dickson Kazuo Yagi

Abdoulakh Anzorov, 18, a Chechen Muslim graduate of France's public schools, beheaded Samuel Paty, a popular teacher in a French public school for junior high students. Mr. Paty had lectured on "secularism" a key concept of French society that claimed that all religions can be criticized and ridiculed. Mr. Paty had a growing awareness of how offensive his lectures were, especially in showing anti-Muslim cartoons of the French satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo published on January 2015. At that time enraged Muslims shot up the office of Charlie Hebdo, killing several employees. Sensing a growing rage among Muslim students in his classroom and their parents now, Mr. Paty suggested that angry students could look away or leave the class. And he proceeded to show the cartoons published in Charlie Hebdo ridiculing Muhammed in the nude. News of these lectures were leaked to the press and so flowed out to Muslim communities. Mr. Paty was killed on October 16, 2020.

The entire nation, including Prime Minister Macron and the French media, was outraged at extreme Muslim terrorists. But few blamed Charlie Hebdo for deliberately inciting the entire Muslim world. The Middle East was aflame with outrage, not only with the murder, but mainly with the criminal nude cartoons of Muhammed. Secularism taught that all religions can be ridiculed and insulted; but why naked cartoons of Muhammed! Why not naked cartoons of Jesus Christ?

I was so comforted that sections of the American press criticized the deliberate inflaming of the Muslim world so some Muslim zealot would commit a crime. Prime Minister Macron angrily accused some of the U.S. media that blamed French media and



Charlie Hepdo instead of Muslim terrorists.

(See New York Times, Nov. 15, 2020, Ben Smith. Also NYT Oct. 29, 2020, Norimitsu Onishi and Constant Méheut. Also Los Angeles Times, Erik Kirschbaum and Laura King, Nov.05, 2020).

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## BUDDHIST SERMONS: THANKSGIVING

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Two or three years ago I was struck by the theme of a day of Buddhist preaching titled: “**Meeting of East and West.**” It was a clever devise with welcome humor. With that theme the public would expect a meeting of Buddhism and Christianity. But It was a celebratory day of multiple sermons from both East and West Branches of Shin Buddhist ministers in the Los Angeles area.

The East Branch Headquarters Temple (Betsuin) in Little Tokyo was the venue. The large temple sanctuary was for sermons in English; a smaller chapel for Japanese sermons. I was bombarded with about 10 English 15 minute sermons. Two sermons especially drew our attention: one from the minister of West Los Angeles Buddhist Temple and the other from his wife—the minister of the San Fernando Valley Hongwanji Buddhist Temple. There may have been some pretended rivalry between these two ministers which brought much laughter.

If truth be told, members of both congregations were addicted to habits of two types of prayer— prayers of petition and prayers of thanksgiving. Curiously few prayers that began with petitions (Give me this, give me that) ever ended with thanksgiving. Few prayers of thanksgiving ended with petitions. Both ministers had the same analysis of prayer habits. The prayers of petition were endless and infinite. And the prayers of thanksgiving were endless and infinite. Once you begin praying, “Give me this, give me that”, the list of requests, like a Christmas list, keep growing and multiplying. So you never get to end the prayer of petitions. You become too obsessed with what more you wish you had.

It is the same with thanksgiving. Once you start giving thanks for this and that, you grow in awareness of all the blessings you have received. That is, your prayer of thanksgiving goes on and on, never switching to petitions of “give me this and that”. With the growing awareness of precious blessings, one gets further and further away from switching to “give me this, give me that.” It just feels shameful to switch to greedy prayers of petition. Both ministers accusing the other of prayers of petition, instead of thanksgiving, brought hearty laughter into the long tiring day of sermons.

In this season of Thanksgiving I am painfully aware of climate catastrophes, wars, threats to our democratic society, and the survival of our planet. Like you, I have deep worries and panic attacks in the dark of the night.

The prayers of petition are infinite and never ending. And the prayers of thanksgiving are infinite and never ending. The word of Buddhist wisdom is to start with never ending prayers of thanksgiving. What do you think?

*Dickson Kazuo Yagi*

## Thanksgiving

*My sincere apology for shortening this to fit this space, DKYagi*

*...It is this kind of genuine human act extended sincerely  
by the native Americans to the newcomers to the  
New World that became the United States of America.  
Unfortunately, such goodness and generosity seem to have  
faded in the mists of history;*

*It has dwindled down togetherness over roasted turkeys,  
mashed potatoes, cranberry and other delicacies.*

*The original thanksgiving saw the native Americans  
as a divine welcome to the new land, but the  
Descendants of the recipients of a welcoming grace  
have transmogrified themselves into owners of a  
land that reduced its original owners as burdens  
of the power and prosperity of their own land.*

*In many churches, God is given thanks, worshipped,  
praised and the native Americans  
are relegated to oblivion and nothingness.*

*Thanksgiving Day is supremely  
important to every human being*

*It reminds them, as it does, of a deeper indebtedness to  
the Creator of all things, who saw all things human  
beings needed to make a new heaven and a new earth.*

*At the heart of it all, is the implant of a reflection of divinity  
in the constitution of every human being that lures them  
in the exercise of their freedom to be in fellowship with  
Him; this is the goal and mission of the divine-human  
synergy which is our highest form of thanksgiving.*

*Levi V. Oracion November 18, 2020 Covina, CA*

Rev. Dr. Levi V. Oracion is a renowned theologian from the Philippines, for many years the Head of the World Council of Churches. He is the author of many books. Dr. Oracion is now retired in Covina, CA.

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## Some Core Values of CPAT

### **Black Lives Matter**

**Reform Police Brutality.** (No choke holds, forbid no knock entries, no quasi police immunity, nat'l data base so convicted police cannot be hired in the next city, no shootings without body cameras, no rubber bullets, no political donations by police unions, no private prisons, social worker specialists to replace police dealing with homeless and mentally ill, no bicycle stops escalating to pointless killings.

### **Protecting Mother Earth, our only Space Ship**

Keep the oil in the ground.  
Stop the Keystone XL Pipeline.  
Protect the Arctic Sanctuary from oil and gas drilling.  
Protect National Parks and Monuments (Trump Administration opened Bear Ears and Grand Staircase-Excalante to oil drilling, fracking, and mining, 2/10/20).

### **Gender Equality**

Equality for LGBTQ. (Supreme Court ruled LGBTQ cannot be fired from work for being gay 6/20.)  
Equal pay for equal work (US women's soccer?)

### **Citizenship for DACA.** (Supreme Court temporarily stopped DACA deportation 6/20).

### **America's Original Sins:**

Stealing land from Native Americans by betraying treaties and genocide.  
National economy built on 400 years of Black slave labor.

### **No Separation of Children from Refugee Parents on Southern Border.** Numerous large detention centers are being built to warehouse these children. These replicate WW2 concentration camps for Japanese Americans.

### **Racial Equality:** No White Supremacy

No racial profiling by police stop-and-search (vs. Afro-Americans).  
No infiltration of mosques by FBI, CIA, Homeland Security.  
No mass incarceration of Afro-Americans through unfair drug laws.  
(Rehabilitation instead of incarceration, fix drug laws.)

### **Freedom of Religion**

Freedom for Uyghur Muslims in Xinjian Province.  
Freedom for Tibetans in religion and politics.  
Freedom for Rohingyas in Rakhine Province in Myanmar.  
Equality for minority Muslims in militant Hindu dominant India.

### **Religions waging peace,** instead of war.

Preemptive strikes as crimes against humanity. (Iraq invasion)  
Nuclear Weapons, Biological Weapons, Chemical Weapons,  
Neutron Bombs as Crimes Against Humanity.  
Disarmament of Nuclear Weapons (No More Hiroshima-Nagasaki)  
Religions networking for social justice in major cities (Jews, Muslims, Christians. Buddhists, and Hindus Together).

### **Power to the People,** democracy.

### **Priority of the Poor.** (Safety nets for the poor and vulnerable, Social Security, Medicare, food stamps, food banks, health insurance)

### **No US Visa Bans against Muslim majority nations.**

(Sudan, Tanzania, Eritrea, Myanmar, Kyrgyzstan, and Nigeria were added to the visa ban, in addition to the 7 previous Muslim nations. 2/05/20).

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