



Martin Luther King Day

Luke 6:27, 35 “*Love your enemies.*”

The Cross of Christ is a religion for Losers. If you seek a religion for Winners, you should join Sunni Islam. Muhammed was Commander-in-Chief of the Islamic army that eventually conquered Empires. Shia Islam, like Christianity, is a religion of defeat, dominated by Sunnis for centuries.

American blacks as former slaves are the losers in white supremacist America. Yet, like Jesus, M. L. King, Jr. was totally dedicated to non-violence. Pastor Martin’s non-violent protestors suffered at the receiving end of batons, growling dogs, jail cells, baseball bats, high pressure water hoses, chains, knives, and guns. And then, of course, there were the centuries of lynchings. But when brutal police and enraged whites try to sleep at night, their conscience attacks them. God uses their conscience, giving them no peace.



Martin Luther King wrote that the weapon of non-violent protestors was the **conscience of their oppressors**. I have limitless admiration for non-violent protestors. But I am a coward. I don’t think I could do that.

January 18, 2021 was Martin Luther King Day just before Lent. M. L. King travelled to India to confer with Mahatma Gandhi. The admiration of Gandhi for the non-violent pacifism of Jesus is well-known.

Jesus, King, and Gandhi—all three were assassinated, giving birth to the Church, Black Unity, and Independence for India. Sulak Sivaraksa, the central non-violent protestor in Thailand, said to me at breakfast, **“We are all cowards!”**

They were all cowards on the march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965— M. L. King, John Lewis, and their brethren. Are you a coward like me? God gives courage to cowards like us when the time comes. Like a zig zagging lightning strike from heaven. Cowards become crusaders.

Dickson Kazuo Yagi

STUTTERING

It was dinner time in the Yagi household in Hawaii. I started to tell what had happened to me in school that day in the 3rd grade. But then it happened. I stuttered and stammered, repeating the same sounds with machine gun speed—exactly like Porky the Pig in movie cartoons of that day. My stuttering was hilariously funny, almost impossible not to laugh. My younger sister laughed and laughed. I got so angry that I threw my spoon at her. She was so startled that she never laughed at my stuttering again for the next 70 years. Glad I threw my spoon and not my fork!

Go to a seminary in Japan? That was not a sane thing to do. We 3rd generation Japanese Americans could not speak Japanese any more. Graduating college in Washington, D.C., I spent a year in the Naganuma language school in Shibuya, (Tokyo School of the Japanese Language).

It was April, 1961, the 1st day of classes at Tokyo Union Theological Seminary. I sat in the first row, right in front of the professor so I could hear everything. Professor Yoshitaka Kumano was a highly respected theologian, having written many books. He started lecturing. I couldn't take notes because I didn't have the foggiest notion what he was saying. It was Systematic Theology class with technical philosophical vocabulary. After 10 minutes Professor Kumano suddenly stopped talking.

He got mad and said to me, "I've spent hours preparing this lecture. Why aren't you taking notes!" I couldn't say anything because I stuttered. When I didn't answer, his face got red, and he shouted, "Why aren't you taking notes? You have to take the exam like everybody else."

When I did not answer, a student named Mawatari said from the back of the class, "Please forgive Yagi. He just came from Hawaii. He can't understand a word you're saying." Kumano sensei was a gentleman. He apologized, saying it was all his fault, that I should forgive him. First week in seminary, and I was getting a scolding in public by one of the leading theologians in Japan. (How did I survive these calamities?)

The Gospel of John in Chapter 1 calls Jesus Christ the **Word of God**. What is a word? Kitamori Kazoh, a brilliant theologian, wrote: "**A word is the crystallization of the heart. When the heart crystallizes into words, it can communicate from heart to heart.**" (*Kotoba wa kokoro no kesshō de aru.*)

I think that words are wonderful, mysterious, miraculous tools of power. I think that words are miraculous because I have stuttered ever since first grade. I stutter so I am misunderstood. I stutter, so I am frustrated. I stutter, so I am humiliated.

With the message of the Cross of Jesus, the heart of God has crystallized into words. The Gospel communicates from heart to heart with all races, all cultures, all classes of people—reaching the depths of despair with a message of hope. That is why Jesus Christ is the **WORD of God**. When we fail to share the Gospel of Jesus, God is misunderstood, God is frustrated, God is ridiculed. Politicians manipulate God as the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, threatening enemies with cruise missiles, drones, and nuclear weapons. The message of self-sacrificial love is totally lost. When we fail to share the Gospel of Jesus, **God stutters**.

The Gospel of Jesus to me is overwhelming mercy, total acceptance, joy that outlasts sorrow, and compassion for all living beings.

D K Yagi

Foundational stories that explain your life should be told and retold often. But it is common sense for preachers not to tell the same story to the same people. They get irritated when they hear the same story a second time.

But I have only one life to live, so my life-changing story should be repeated often. That is the contradiction of people who want to hear something different every time, while the foundational story of the speaker is the same throughout his lifetime. I could not speak without stuttering from 1st grade through 12th grade. And my first 5 years in Japan speaking Japanese.

So here, I repeat my story of stuttering. If you heard it before, please forgive me. I have only one life to live. I promise not to repeat it at least for another 2 years.

BEYOND MEAT

My father owned the only private slaughterhouse on the Big Island. We killed pigs, chickens, and cattle—pigs from 2 am, so they could be sold wholesale and retail in Hilo meat markets from mid-morning.

Chickens on Wednesday afternoons. I ran the de-feathering machine—long solid rubber fingers on a rotating drum that slapped the feathers off the chickens scalded in hot water to loosen the feathers. I was covered with reddish brown chicken feathers from head to toe with some blotches of blood here and there.

Some days I was the executioner—balancing on top of the narrow cattle chute that allowed only one cattle through at a time. I drew an imaginary line from the horns crossing to the eyes and shot the .22 caliber rifle where the lines crossed in the middle of the forehead. I yelled, “OK.” Inside the slaughterhouse they pulled the rope on pulleys that lifted the door open.

But the bulls were a different story. Their forehead bone was too thick for the bullet to penetrate. So I had to lift the rifle behind the horns and shoot downward, avoiding the thick skull of the forehead. If I lost my balance I would fall into the narrow chute with the bull and get trampled. So I held onto a scaffolding post with one hand and shot with the other. Holding a long rifle with one hand and shooting while balancing on the top of the narrow chute is a unique slaughterhouse skill. It is forbidden to even think about losing my footing. Some bulls are giant monsters.

The stunned cattle rolled over onto the slaughterhouse floor. Dad chained both hind legs onto a power crane, lifting the animal high in the air so its throat was a foot off the concrete floor. Then with professional skill he slit the jugular vein to bleed out thoroughly. The meat inspector, Mr. Nii, took a blood sample from each steer. Over the years I may have killed a hundred. My brother and I worked only during summers as we were in high school 9 months of the year.

It is some 45 years since my last killing. But when I close my eyes for 10 seconds I can still hear the pigs screaming as my uncle smashes their forehead with a sledgehammer 2 a.m. in the morning.

I follow with great interest the sale of plant based meat substitutes sold in supermarkets—**Beyond Meat**. Some day the pigs will stop screaming in my memory banks? *Dickson Kazuo Yagi*

Why did God create a world where many animals survive only by eating each other? Bill, a spiritual director, answered: “This is only a brief period of early human history. Very soon we will overcome this primitive era and progress to plant and vegetable diets.” In our supermarkets already are **Beyond Burger, Impossible Burger, Beyond Breakfast Sausage, and Beyond Beef**. Housewives think that steaks come from supermarkets? We all need a tour of slaughterhouses during killing time. Japanese would have a difficult time giving up sushi?

Ahimsa, the central principle of Jainism, claims that it is immoral to kill any living being. This prohibition is adopted by Buddhism world-wide (sesshōkai), but vegetarianism is expected only of clergy—monks and nuns. Japanese Buddhist priests universally break three basic prohibitions—celibacy, eating meat, and drinking alcohol. They also ignore the universal Buddhist clergy prohibition of eating past 12 noon. It is not well-known that only priests in Japan can eat evening dinner. Buddhist monks and nuns throughout the world fast at dinner time for the rest of their lives. This is what was at stake when the emperor permitted the adoption of the new Mahayana Ordination Vows at Mt. Hiei in Kyoto, beside the Theravada Ordination Vows at Nara.

“**Beyond Meat** is a Los Angeles-based producer of plant-based meat substitutes founded in 2009 by Ethan Brown. The company's initial products were launched in the United States in 2012. The company has products designed to emulate beef, meatballs, ground meat, and pork sausage links and patties.” [Wikipedia. “Beyond Meat,” February, 3, 2021.](#)



GRIEF AND RESURRECTION (September, 2019)

When we put together memorial services, we usually center on the celebration of the life of the person who has died. That makes sense. We want to celebrate a life well lived. It affirms the wonder of our lives. This says to us that all of life is worth celebrating, and that life is a GIFT.

However, in our American culture we often deny the reality of death. We don't want to look at it as it reminds us that we too will die. This carries over into our view of grief. Isn't grief something you should "get over" as quickly as possible?

NO, NO, NO, NO

I realize when my wife Laurie died that my grief seemed to go rapidly because she took a long time to move toward death and I had begun my grieving a couple of years before she actually died. But not so with Barbara. She died too soon. Before we were ready.

I think of the Apostle Paul's statement that "the last enemy is death." Death is an enemy. It stops a life well lived. One moment you are chatting with the person you love, and very, very soon the person is dead, gone, and will be there no more. That isn't a relief. It is a shock. She is not "in a better place." She is not in this place. She has left and is not coming back. My life has changed. So much of life is relationship. I am not just me by myself. I am me with the one I love. My grief is not only for the loss of her, but for the loss of ME WITH HER.

I believe in resurrection. But for me that does not mean that the person who died will return in some form or resides in "heaven" as some kind of supernatural place.

Resurrection, for me, means that in the midst of death, in facing the reality of loss, new life can emerge. New life for those who are still here. The loss of "me with her" will become, in time, and if I am ready and willing to receive it, a new me. As Paul knew, when Jesus died, his life with his followers became a new life. Paul called it a "new creation."

New creations don't come right away. Grief must have its days. Loss needs time. But in the fullness of time, new life will come. A life that, for me, includes the acceptance of the gift that was Barbara (and Laurie), and the incorporation of those gifts into the new life. For I believe that nothing, not death nor anything in all creation, can separate us from life in the Spirit.

Bill Malcomson

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 logic, but experience—the joys and tears of the briar patch of life that is our real life journey. Many of us are his secret disciples.

DRYagi



What About Penal Substitutionary Atonement? (July 10, 2017)

Dr. Leroy Seat

There will be decidedly different reactions to the main topic of this article. Some readers no doubt think that the Christian doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement is of utmost importance. Others, however, think that such a doctrine is wrongheaded and should be opposed. So, which side is right?

The Emphasis on PSA

The emphasis on penal substitutionary atonement (PSA) has been prominent in Protestant theology for nearly 500 years now. That theory of the atonement, however, has come under more and more scrutiny in recent decades.

Some Protestants even reject the idea of PSA. Wm. Paul Young, about whom I wrote in my June 25 blog article ([see here](#)), is just one such person. Because of the growing opposition to the idea of PSA, last month (June 2017) the Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution affirming “the truthfulness, efficacy, and beauty of the biblical doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement as the burning core of the Gospel message and the only hope of a fallen race.”

That strong emphasis on PSA probably expresses the position of the majority of conservative evangelical Christians. But other Christians disagree.

Questioning PSA

In addition to Young’s contention that the core element of PSA might be thought of as a “lie” believed about God, there are contemporary theologians who seriously question the PSA on biblical and theological grounds. Of many who might be cited, let me mention only two Mennonite theologians: J. Denny Weaver and Ted Grimsrud. Weaver (b. 1941) is now Professor Emeritus of Religion at Bluffington University. He is the author of two important books about the atonement: *The Nonviolent Atonement* (2nd ed., 2011) and, secondarily, *The Nonviolent God* (2013).

Grimsrud (b. 1954) served as a professor of theology at Eastern Mennonite University until his early retirement in 2016. He is the author of *Instead of Atonement: The Bible’s Salvation Story* and *Our Hope for Wholeness* (2013).

Both of these theologians reject the traditional doctrine of PSA, emphasizing that violent retribution, such as by Jesus’ crucifixion, was not necessary in order for humans to be saved from God’s wrath. Rather, because of God’s unfathomable love and mercy God has always been able to forgive sin and to restore sinners who seek forgiveness.

An Alternative to PSA

In 1967 when I was still in Japanese language school, I read *Interpreting the Atonement*, a new book by Dr. Robert H. Culpepper, my missionary *sempai* (older colleague). After reading the book, I wrote two typewritten pages (which I still have) of reflections and questions. The main question I raised was about the necessity of penal substitutionary atonement, although I didn’t use those exact words.

Bob, as I came to know him, wrote a good and helpful book, but even then I was drawn primarily to the subjective, rather than an objective, view of the atonement. An objective view of the atonement means that something had to be done, in history, in order for God to be able to forgive sinful humans. Sin had to be punished. The “something” done was the crucifixion of Christ, who became the substitute for sinful humankind.

The subjective view posits the need for repentance but sees no objective, historical event as necessary for God to be able to forgive sinful humans. God is seen as all-merciful, all-loving, and always ready to forgive repentant persons.

According to this latter view, the prodigal son's father can be seen as depicting the true nature of God. Restoration with a wayward child is dependent only on that child's repentance and returning home. **No violent sacrifice is necessary.**

Reflect deeply on this point as you look at the following detail of Rembrandt's "Return of the Prodigal Son."



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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.

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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