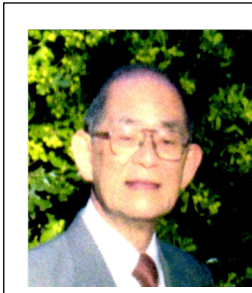




SILENCE



I learned the five fingers of the Prayer Hand in the Baptist Church—Confession, Thanksgiving, Adoration, Intercession, and Petition. These are word prayers to God. Notice that nobody is **listening** to God. Too busy **talking** to God. In the West we naturally speak words to a God modeled after a human **Father God**.

In the East most religions **listen to God** (without words) because God is **Universal Mind**. Prayer is Universal Mind plugged into human minds continually from birth to death. Continually plugged in, there is no need for words.

An American Catholic monk doing Zen silent meditations in Japan spoke of Universal Mind as already present in the Christian Trinity as the **Holy Spirit**. We speak words to God the Father. We speak words to Jesus the Son, but we don't speak words to the Holy Spirit. Our hearts are warmed by the Spirit. We are led by the Spirit. The Spirit fires our courage and our imagination. In Greek the Spirit is "**wind**" and "**breath**." No need for words because the Spirit is already within us—Universal Mind plugged into my mind from birth to death.

So Christians should not fear absorbing the Divine Presence in silence. Prayer in silence has become a popular Christian movement among Catholics and Protestants called "**Centering Prayer**."

Romans 8:26 "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words."

At Tokyo Union Seminary, the New Testament professor lectured on Galatians 2:20 where Paul describes being crucified with Christ. Having died with Christ, it is no longer Paul who lives in his body. It is now Christ who lives in Paul's body. I was dumbfounded when the professor said, "We do not know what happened to Paul, because Paul was a mystic, and we are not mystics."

I had left the only world I knew in Hawaii, got on a ship crossing the Pacific to Yokohama, following Jesus to Japan by myself. By golly I wanted everything Paul had to offer, not what the professor was offering.

Before I retired after some 27 years as a university Professor of Christian Theology, I spent many weeks in Zen monasteries sitting 8 hours a day in silent group meditation called **sesshin** (touch the heart). There was also **dokusan** (private interviews with the Zen Master). I wanted what Paul experienced, not what the professor was offering. Let us all become mystics with Paul! The silence calls us to a lifetime of listening. Then fruitful action by what we hear. This Universal Mind is what Quakers call Holy Spirit, "**that of God in you and me**."

D.K. Yagi

Dickson K. Yagi is a 3rd generation Okinawan-American from Hilo, Hawaii. He graduated George Washington Univ. in D.C. After a year of language school, he earned Bachelor and Masters degrees at Tokyo Union Theological Seminary (1965). He then earned another Masters degree and a Ph.D. at Southern Baptist Theo. Seminary (Louisville, 1972). He also studied Buddhism at Univ. of Hawaii in post-grad. studies from David Kalupahana (Theravada), David Chappell, and Alfred Bloom (both Mahayana). He taught for some 27 years at Seinan Gakuin University in Fukuoka, where he is Prof. Emeritus in Christian Studies. He served a term as Head Chaplain of the university. For a decade he was a member of **Tōzai Shūkyō Kōryū Gakkai**, an advanced level of Buddhist Christian Dialogue mainly by university professors.

Dickson is Chair of the Council for Pacific Asian Theology (CPAT), Nikkei Interfaith Fellowship, and the Religions Committee of Pilgrim Place Retirement Community. He can be reached at dkyagi@icloud.com

INSANE AND SANE TALK

DRYagi

INSANE TALK TO IRAN: You should not build even one atomic bomb, even if we have a 1,000.

SANE TALK TO IRAN: Don't build any atomic bombs because we will throw away all ours.

INSANE TALK TO LIBYA: You should not build even one atomic bomb, even if we have a 1,000.

SANE TALK FROM MUAMMAR GADDAFI (LIBYA): Christian bomb O.K? Muslim bomb No Good?

A SWIM IN KIHEI BAY

DRYagi

I learned to swim over a mile in swimming pools in Fukuoka. But Kihei Bay on Maui was live ocean. No one had warned me of the difference. As I swam from the beach to a boat parked out in the bay, I noticed a slight ripple on the surface of the water. I needed to push down more than normal with each arm stroke and leg kick, so my mouth could rise above the ripples to breathe.

After a while my arms were exhausted from the extra push downward. And my legs could not kick another time. I looked around. Nobody in sight! I would drown without even crying out! Crying out would deplete precious energy. Soon I was on my last breath. With the next breath, I would swallow the Pacific Ocean. Strange, but time stands still when you are dying. My whole life flashed before my eyes in a split second.

Then my self-perseverance switch turned off. This self-perseverance switch was turned on since birth. Now for the first time it switched off. That brought on total panic. An absolute sadness overcame my entire body. Every cell in my body was in total mourning, crying out it seemed, "abandon ship!" "Abandon ship!" "We are dying! We are dying!" Like rats abandoning a sinking ship, every cell in my body was giving up the tremendous fight to keep on living. My whole body, every cell in my body, was in total panic and wailing in sorrow and grief.

But my brain was disconnected. My brain was totally surprised by all this commotion. What's happening! What's happening! My nervous system and all my emotions had burst out of control

in total grieving and sorrow. But my brain had no idea what was going on. My brain kept asking, "What's going on! What's going on!"

Depth psychology of Freud and Jung speaks of a dividing strata between the conscious mind and the subconscious mind. I have never studied such things. But all of a sudden I was experiencing it. My whole personality was in total despair and grieving. But my brain was disconnected, asking "What's happening?" "What's happening?" Two parts of me, finally talking to each other.

In the split second before swallowing the Pacific Ocean, in that magic moment when time stood still, a primitive wisdom from a primitive place in me by-passed my brain and spoke to my body. I flipped on my back with my face toward the sky. And I was floating.

Being so skinny, I never could float in a fresh water pool, but you float better in the salt water ocean. Totally exhausted, I could not move a muscle in my arms or legs. I floated with a current. If the current were going out, I am dead. Totally exhausted, I could not lift my head up to see if I were floating in or going out. I had already given up myself for dead. I have no idea how long I floated. But suddenly my legs hit bottom. I was chest high in Kihei Beach. The ocean current delivered me safely to the shore. I wasn't going to die today!

The self-perseverance switch turned on again. All the cells of my body stood up and cheered! Total rejoicing! I was out of control with extreme joy and celebration. I was crying with tears flowing down my face. Once again my brain was disconnected. My body, my nervous system, my emotions, and my intuitions were in total joy and celebration. I have never experienced such joy before! But my brain was disconnected, asking, "What's going on?" "What's going on?"

This drowning experience is about 40 years ago on Kihei Bay on Maui. This physical strata within me, yet unknown to me, hints at the vast psychological strata that also remain unknown to me. Anyway, after my personal journey on this earth is over, may all parts of me shake hands and be friends.

To the **Great Mystery** (God, Cosmic Christ, Dharma-kaya, Buddha Nature, Allah, Akua) who keeps our bodies alive and keeps the entire universe of galaxies moving just right, I would like to say, "Thank you."

"May you live through me, healing me and those around me with warmth, energy, and friends."
"Be my Path and Companion, my Beginning and End."

***"Ima, Inochi ga anata o ikite iru." "Now Life is living [through] you."
"LIFE is the Great Mystery." "AHIMSA -- Reverence for LIFE."***

CONSCIENCE

DR Yagi

In Japan a Christian pastor refused to make public the confession of an accused criminal. The police were outraged, bringing the pastor to trial. The judge, however, ruled that the pastor had the right to keep the confession secret. Obeying his conscience, the judge resisted pressure from the police and sided with the Christian pastor.

Although Japan is less than 1% Christian, God has many allies through conscience. Christians are not the only disciples of God. In my 32 years in Japanese universities, I have met many Buddhists, Shintoists, and non-religious who live day by day close to God through conscience.

Conscience is for Gentiles what the Jewish Law (Torah) is for Jews! *"When Gentiles who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness. . . ."* (Romans 2:14)

We can run away from our father and the police, but we cannot run away from God. God is the police within, blowing the whistle in our hearts as the voice of conscience. Emil Brunner defines humans as those who **respond** to the voice of God through conscience--and so are **responsible**. Those who are deaf to conscience are no longer true humans. Your conscience bothering you again? That is proof God has not given up on you as human.

AN EYE ON THE NEWS

Greenhouse Gas Cut to 50% by 2030

President Obama had pledged to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 26% to 28% below 2005 levels by 2025 (Paris Accord). Biden will increase that target to **50% to 52% by 2030**. This, of course, requires major changes in how we power cars, homes, and factories.

Gov. Gavin Newsom ordered that all new cars sold in California to be **zero-emission vehicles** by 2035.

Chris Megerian, LATimes, April 22, 2021.

Forced Sterilization of Muslim Women in China

To reverse a falling birthrate, women in China are encouraged to have more babies. But in Xinjian mass internment camps of Muslim Uyghurs and Kazakhs, many women are forced to be fitted with contraceptive devices. Sterilization rates have increased 6 fold from 2015 to 2018 to over 60,000 procedures.

Amy Qin, LATimes, May 11, 2021

JESUS IS US

DR. WILLIAM MALCOMSON



People often ask me "If Jesus were here now, what would he be like?" My answer is that he would be one of us. We probably would not even recognize him, except that he would have a number of people of all sorts supporting him. Where do I think he would be? If he continued to be a good, young, Jewish man, he would be in synagogue on a weekend.

If he decided to be a "Christian" he would be in one of our congregations. When he is not in church, he would probably be in a homeless shelter or some non-profit organization that was working with people such as battered women, homeless men and women, recovering alcoholics, or recovering substance abusers.

Remember that I feel that he was crucified because he spoke truth to power.

One power that he spoke truth to was the Roman government. So he would probably be contacting his congresspeople about issues he cared about.

The other group whose power he spoke truth to were the Jewish priestly hierarchy. Today that would mean religious leaders who speak out against those things for which Jesus felt strongly.

I am not sure we would like him. He might say things that were out of the mainstream and more radical. If he were a member of our congregation, he would probably be hard to live with.

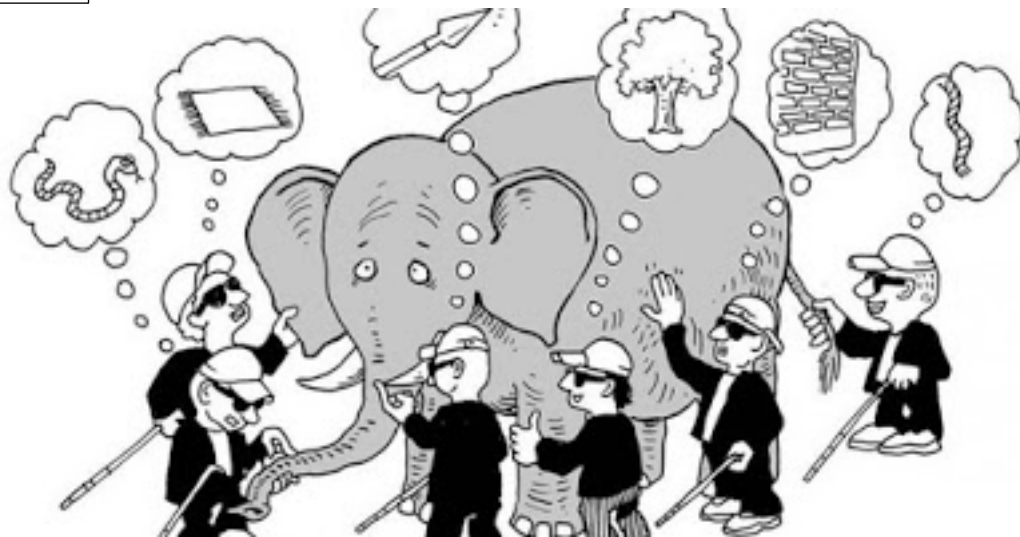
If Jesus is one of us, then we have no excuse for failing to live as he lives. He is not some high and mighty "Son of God" who is taking care of things for us. We have to take care of things ourselves. But we can follow him and do as he does.

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 University 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. Many of us are his secret disciples. *DR. Magi*



PONDERING PACHYDERM PERAMBULATION



John Godfrey Saxe was an American poet. Saxe (1816~87) is now known mainly for his re-telling of the ancient Indian parable "The Blind Men and the Elephant" (1872), which introduced the story to a Western audience.

Many of you know that old story, but it is worth reading again in its entirety, so please [click here](#) and take a couple of minutes to read what poet Saxe called "a Hindoo fable."

Early versions of the old tale go back to at least 500 BCE, and its origins were probably far earlier than that. References to it are found in ancient Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain texts.

That old story has often been used in what the poet Saxe called "theologic wars," but interestingly, the old fable has been used in [teaching about the Peace Corps](#),

in discussions of systems engineering ([see here](#)), and in a 2020 [Psychology Today magazine article](#), to give but a few examples.

A New Book

John J. Thatamanil is Associate Professor of Theology and World Religions at Union Theological Seminary. His new (2020) book is titled ***Circling the Elephant: A Comparative Theology of Religious Diversity***.

Thatamanil, born in India and a U.S. resident since the age of eight, is an impressive scholar and his book will be appreciated most by scholars in the academic field that used to be called “comparative religion.” Most others will likely find reading/understanding the book quite demanding.

The book begins with “Introduction: Revisiting an Old Tale” (pp. 1~19). In the first thirteen pages, Thatamanil briefly summarizes the old story and discusses some of the criticisms leveled against it.

He informs his readers, “This book is a *Christian* exercise in pachyderm perambulation” (p. 11). In more common words, it is about circling the elephant, the author’s metaphor for how he “seeks to make theological sense of the reality and meaning of religious diversity” (p. 12).

The first chapter begins with a discussion of the question “Should Religious Diversity Be a ‘Problem’ for Christians?” (pp. 21~29)—and for the next 230 pages Thatamanil argues that the answer to that question should be No.

The Ongoing Issue

So, how do people of one religious faith relate to people of other faiths? Traditionally, the usual stance of Western Christians was the “we are right, they are wrong” position.

But through the years, interreligious contact increasingly morphed the views of many Christians toward inclusivist, as opposed to exclusivist, views—and then more and more toward pluralistic views.

Thatamanil critically examines those three positions in Chapter Two. He wants to move beyond all three of those widely held viewpoints-or at least to what he

calls “relational pluralism,” as elucidated in chapter three.

And then the concept of religion itself is discussed in the fourth and fifth chapters. This prompts us to raise questions such as, In comparing Christianity to other religions, what form of Christianity is chosen? And what form of, say, Islam?

Do we compare the Christianity of the Quakers and Mennonites with the Islamic jihadists?

Or do we compare the Christian militants through the centuries with the Buddhism represented by people such as Thích Nhất Hạnh—or the Muslim family that lovingly cared for my Christian friend Delores ([see here](#))?

In spite of all that Thatamanil wrote in his scholarly book, and the ongoing intellectual issues that he dealt with so admirably, perhaps the most serious religious issue today is not how the various religions “see” the “elephant” differently but how people increasingly don’t see the “elephant” at all.

And even those who do argue most about the various facets of the “elephant” increasingly belong to the same religious tradition—and those embracing significant agreement increasingly belong to different religious traditions.

** I received the book introduced above under the auspices of the Speakeasy book review plan that is headed by Mike Morrell. In addition to this article, I have posted a much fuller summary of the book on my supplementary blogsite ([see here](#)).

This essay was first published on May 26, 2021 in Dr. Seat’s blog,

TheViewFromThisSeat.blogspot.com Presented here by permission of author.

Dr. Leroy Seat and I studied together under the same professors for some years in graduate school in Louisville. Then we taught together for several decades on the same faculty of Seinan Gakuin University in Fukuoka, Japan. An outstanding professor, pastor, and administrator, he was elevated as Chancellor of the university for many years. You can enjoy the inspiring and insightful writings of this incurable reformer, creative thinker, and follower of Jesus by reading his blog. *D.K. Yagi*

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MORE NEWS

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

President Biden formally announced the U.S. government's acknowledgement that the mass killing by Turkish troops of some 1,500,000 Armenians at the collapse of the Ottoman Empire (beginning in 1915) was **genocide**. It is a reflection of the Turkey-U.S. strained relations resulting from Turkey's purchase of military weapons from Russia, and Turkey's military attack on vital U.S. allies (Kurds) in the battle in Syria. The purchase was a S-400 missile defense system from Russia. This purchase from Russia, of course, puts Turkey at odds with all NATO allies, whose common enemy is Russia.

In the past, 500 U.S. B61 nuclear bombs were stored in Turkey. It is assumed that certainly some remain.

Kris Megerian, LATimes May 25, 2021. Tracy Wilkinson, LATimes, April 22, 2021.

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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 Dakota Access 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. Biden renews LGBTQ in military)
Equal pay for equal work (Salary equality for men and women)

Citizenship for DACA. (Biden stopped DACA deportation).

America's Original Sins:

Stealing land from Native Americans by betraying treaties and by genocide.
National economy built on 400 years of Black slave labor.
National railway built on blood, sweat, and tears of Chinese laborers.

No Separation of Children from Refugee Parents on Southern Border. .

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. (Syria)
Disarmament of Nuclear Weapons (No More Hiroshima-Nagasaki)
Religions networking for social justice in major cities (Jews, Muslims, Christians. Buddhists, and Hindus Together).

Priority of the Poor. (Safety nets for the poor and vulnerable, Social Security, Medicare, food stamps, food banks, health insurance for all, \$15 minimum wage)

Israel must provide Coronavirus vaccines to Palestinians in Gaza Strip.

Close down Guantanamo Prison

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