



COUNCIL FOR PACIFIC ASIAN THEOLOGY (CPAT)

PACIFIC ASIAN VISION

VOLUME Thirty-five, Number 11, December, 2021. Editor: Dickson Kazuo Yagi



CHRISTMAS BLOODLINE

Romans 1:3 says that Jesus was "big shot" because of his bloodline. He was a descendant of King David. I hate that. Gautama Buddha was a rich prince groomed to be the ruler. Bloodline. I hate that. Muhammed was a poor orphan, raised by an uncle. **I like that.**

Politicians, business tycoons, and revolutionaries claim bloodlines. But religions should not. Rather, religions should aim at spirit sensitivity, courage, generosity, compassion, and selfless dedication.

This is exactly what Hebrews 7:15-17 claims in direct contradiction of Romans 1:3. **Bible against Bible**. Not the bloodline of King David, but the bloodline of Melchizedek, King of Righteousness and King of Salem, without mother, father, or any bloodline. He had become a priest, not by "**bodily descent**" (bloodline), but by "**the power of an indestructible life**," 7:16,17. "**He is without father or mother or genealogy**," 7:13.

In Japan they brag about "**Samurai blood**." In Hawaii they brag about "**Ali'i blood**." Bragging about bloodline! Jesus was not a big shot because of who his great, great, great, great Grandfather was. Jesus was elevated because he was "**Real Stuff**," filled, and moved, and living by the Spirit. Are you Samurai blood? Ali'i blood? Who cares! **Let's be Real Stuff** this Christmas. Let's live by the Spirit.

Dickson Kazuo Yagi

A THERAVADA BUDDHIST PRAYER

May I be well, happy, peaceful, and prosperous.
May no harm come to me, may no difficulties come to me.
May I also have patience, understanding, courage, and
determination to meet and overcome inevitable
difficulties, problems, and failures in life.

May all beings be well, happy, peaceful, and prosperous.
May no harm come to them, may no difficulties come to them.
May they have patience, understanding, courage,
and determination to meet and overcome inevitable
difficulties, problems, and failures in life.

Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara

I BELIEVE

I am welcomed by the God Who is Unconditional Love, **ABBA**,
Also known as Amida, Allah, Kōbō Daishi, Akua, and more.
The God in me greets the God in you and in all living beings.

I walk the briar patch of life step by step,
Between the mystery of Birth and the mystery of Death,
With the Spirit of the Risen Christ as Companion.

I believe that every cell of my body
Is saturated by the Spirit of God.

I believe that Joy outlasts all Grief, Sorrow, and Wars
All tears are swallowed up in the
Joyous Reunion of all Souls in the Heart of God.

If the human earthly experiment ends in tragic climate disaster,
The universe surely has other genetic lines that will do better.
May we humans awake in the nick of time.

Spiritual Mentors:

Grandpa Seiryu Yagi
Brother Francis of Assisi
Father Damien, Mother Teresa
Mahatma M. Gandhi
Zen Master Robert B. Aitken
Martin Luther King, Jr.
Malcom X, Muhammed Ali
Nelson Mandela, Bantu Steven Biko
Toyohiko Kagawa
John B. Cobb, Jr.

*God is bigger than human minds can think
or human language express.*

God is bigger than any one religion.

Since God opposes all empires of super-race or super-nation.

Instead of "God Bless America."

Let us say, "God Bless Us All, Everyone."

*Especially the poor, the refugees, and even our enemies;
all plants, animals, and our Mother Earth.*

*As Muslims say, "God is closer to us than our jugular vein,"
Being the anchor, breath, and heartbeat of our souls.*

Dickson K. Yagi

NEWS

One eye on the Bible; another eye on the Newspaper

Native American Tribal Lands Returned

* In 2015 nearly 700 acres on the Northern CA coast was returned to the Kashia tribe of Pomo Indians.

*One of the Esselen tribes reacquired almost 1,200 acres on the Big Sur coast.

[LATimes. Joely Proudfit, Louiseño; Dina Gilio-Whitaker, Nicole Lim, Nov 24, 2021]

AAPI Hate

***StopAAPI Hate** reported 9,081 incidents of AAPI hate crimes nationwide between March 19, 2020, to June 30, 2021. [LATimes, Nov. 13, 2021, Nathan Solis. Jaclyn Cosgrove contributing,]

Shin Buddhism on LGBTQ

*An LGBTQ panel was held for a Honolulu Shin Buddhist temple, Nishi Hongwanji, 2021. Rev. Mary David, panel moderator, said, "Amida Buddha accepts us **just as we are**. Therefore, the Sangha, should accept by affirmation other peoples' different sexual orientation and not just passively accept gays and lesbians. Affirmation means to **openly and actively accept gays and lesbians**." Moiliili Nishi Hongwanji.

BUDDHA NATURE

by Dickson Kazuo Yagi

Traditional Christian theology had slogans of "**Original Sin**," describing human irresistible tendency toward **evil**, and "**Image of God**," (Genesis 1:26, 27; 9:6) describing human natural, divine **Goodness**. Most theologians balanced human nature as a blend of both Good and Evil tendencies. But those emphasizing the punishing function of a God of unbending justice focused on Original Sin, placating God's anger by the Cross of Christ as substitute punishment (**penal substitution**). Those emphasizing the **unconditional Love of God** saw no need for the Cross of Christ as substitute punishment. Rather, the Cross revealed the self-sacrificial love of God for humans from the beginning of cosmic history. They emphasized "**Image of God**" as the natural Goodness of humans that mirrors the sacred Goodness of God.

The same contradiction of Original Sin and Image of God happens in Japanese Buddhism. *Enryakuji* monastery on *Hieizan*, a mountain northeast of Kyoto, became the Headquarters of the new Tendai Buddhism brought back from China by Saicho in 805. Tendai, though eclectic in scope of teaching,

is based on **Original Enlightenment** 本覚 hongaku. That is the opposite of the Christian **Original Sin**. All humans are good from birth because of the **Buddha Nature** (仏性 *busshō*) at the foundation of our being. The seeds of Buddhahood are sown within us at birth, called **Tathagata-garbha** (**Womb Buddha**).

This claim of a good, sacred destiny for all humans is united in three Buddhist technical terms: **Original Enlightenment** 本覚、**Buddha nature** 仏性, and **tathagata garbha** (Womb Buddha). They all point to the "Buddha Within" that penetrates the universe as the Buddha Principle, **Dharma-kaya**. Risshō Kōsei Kai speaks of an invisible, omnipresent, eternal Cosmic Buddha 久遠仏 *ku-on-butsu* always and everywhere nudging us toward the Good and Sacred. [Nikkyō Niwano, *Buddhism for Today: A Modern Interpretation of the Threefold Lotus Sutra*, 1976, 1994]

You may wander through 1,000 lifetimes as a thief or a serial killer. But in some lifetime you will become a Buddha because you are already a Buddha at birth. That is, you will become what you are by destiny. Professor Ogasawara of International Buddhism at Komazawa University (Tokyo) gave me a weekly worship bulletin of his Zen Buddhist temple. At the top of the bulletin was the slogan 一切衆生悉有仏性 *issai shujō shitsu ū busshō*, "**All living beings have Buddha nature.**" For Zen, Tendai, Shingon, Risshō Kōsei Kai, and others, this is a fundamental Mahayana slogan.

But then there is the contradicting Gospel of the boundless mercy of **Amida Buddha**. Humans are hopelessly chained to suffering (**dukkha**) by clinging attachments (Four Noble Truths) and the **Three Poisons** of Greed, Anger, and Illusion (ignorance). Salvation is not by accumulated merits of **Self-Power** (*jiriki* 自力, karma). Salvation to the Pure Land (Nirvana) of Amida is by 他力本願 *tariki hongan* "Salvation by **the Power Beyond Self**," (Amida Buddha).

Original Enlightenment, Buddha-nature, and Womb Buddha cannot save us because they are the **result**, not the cause, of Amida Buddha's boundless mercy for us helpless and hopeless fallen humans. Our bad karma is overwhelmed by the infinite **surplus of merits** in Amida's bank account that now flows and overflows our bank account of bad karma (excuse my non-traditional parable of bank accounts).

Humans are saved from their helpless and hopeless state of negative karma by **Salvation Buddhas** (Amida, Kannon, Jizō, and others), **Salvation Sutras** (Buddhist Bibles--especially the **Lotus Sutra**), **Salvation by Silent Sitting** (Zen in silence as human minds absorb the Universal Mind) and **Salvation by Esoteric Practices** (Mudras, Mantras, Mandelas and the **Goma** monthly fire ceremony by Shingon-Tendai from Vajrayana Buddhism in Tibet and Nepal).

My Hawai'i family was Koyasan Shingon Buddhist. While in the 4th grade I was baptised as a Baptist Evangelical chained to the guilt of **Original Sin** and saved by the penal substitution of the Cross of Jesus. In 30 years teaching Christian theology in the Japanese university to Buddhist and Shinto students, I needed to know Buddhism. As I inched slowly from the pessimistic **Original Sin** to the optimistic **Image of God** in Christian thinking, I was surprised by the very similar contrast in the **optimism of Buddha Nature** and the hopeless **pessimism** conquered by the infinite Grace of Amida Buddha.

Then there is the sympathetic suffering of Kannon Bodhisattva "**Who Hears the Groanings of all Creatures.**" Kannon (**Kwan Yin**, Chinese) has 1,000 arms that symbolize the infinity of simultaneous saving actions she performs continually. The optimism and pessimism of Christianity and Buddhism perhaps portray the multi-levels of social justice activism and healing care passivism required of modern religions. What do you think?

* Although most of our essays are devotional, I will sneak in a solid theological essay now and then for those who like to think.

* Devotees of Kannon created the Canon Camera Company in Japan.

[Paul F. Knitter & Roger Haight, *Jesus and Buddha*, Orbis Books, 2015.]

[George Tanabe & Willa Jane Tanabe, *The Lotus Sutra in Japanese Culture*, U. of Hawaii Press]

[Paul F. Knitter, *Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian*, 2013]

A BLESSING

Great Spirit,
You are always with us
Therefore
All that is now past
We surrender to you with thanks
All that is now present
We receive from you with wonder
All that is yet to be,
We await from you with hope,
Knowing that in all our days you walk with us,
In all our hours you dwell in us,
In all our years you provide for us.

Amen

anonymous



Dr. Leroy Seat

Singing the Praises of "A Christmas Carol"

Dr. Leroy Seat (December 20, 2012)

For 175 years now, Charles Dickens's novella ***A Christmas Carol*** has delighted and inspired people throughout the English-speaking world. Six years ago, which was 200 years after Dickens's birth in 1812, I posted a blog article titled "**A Dickens of a Good Story**" ([see here](#)) and I encourage you to read it (again) as well as this new article.

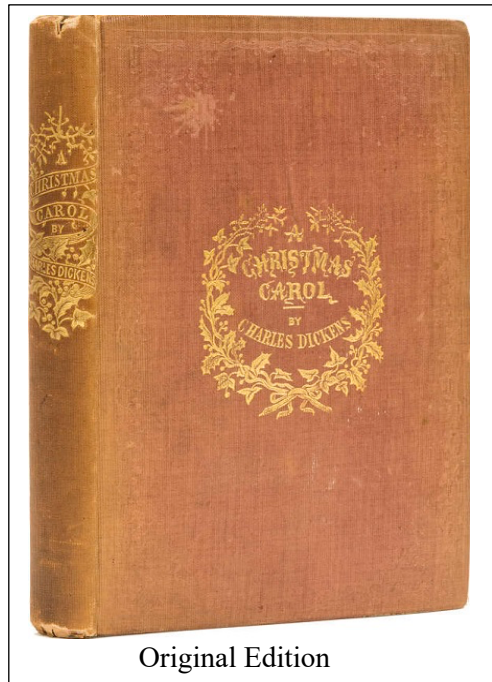
"The Man Who Invented Christmas"

Les Standiford, an American author/novelist, has written a book titled ***The Man Who Invented Christmas*** (2008). It is about how ***A Christmas Carol*** rescued Dickens's career and led to a reinvigorated celebration of Christmas in England and the U.S.

Last month I read Standiford's delightful book, and then June and I enjoyed watching the 2017 movie by the same name, even though the movie is quite different from the book.

Dickens started writing his short Christmas novel on October 13, 1843, and it was published on December 19. Earlier that year, Dickens had gone up from London and spent some time in Manchester, observing the plight of the poor in that industrial city.

It was at that very time that Friedrich Engels was studying the lives of the factory employees in Manchester. In ***The Condition of the Working Class in England*** (1844), Engels described the heart of that city as a place of "filth, ruin, and uninhabitableness."



Original Edition

Because of his own boyhood days as a child laborer with his father in a debtor's prison, as well as from his visits to Manchester and the seedy sections of London, Dickens knew well about the problem of poverty—and the gap between the well-heeled (such as Scrooge) and the struggling poor (such as Bob Cratchit and his family).

As is widely known, *A Christmas Carol* is about the redemption of the miserly Ebenezer Scrooge as the three ghosts he encounters on Christmas Eve help transform him into a man of generosity and goodwill.

Dickens's delightful story is credited with removing the lingering stigma of Christmas celebrations from 17th century Puritanism and making Christmas a time for family enjoyment and communal generosity.

Altering the Future

In Dickens's story, Scrooge asks the third ghost, "Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?" And then, understandingly, Scrooge declares, "Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead. But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change."

When he awakens after the departure of the third ghost, the regenerated Scrooge proclaims that "the shadows of the things that would have been, may be dispelled. They will be. I know they will!" (p. 80). And so it was in the story.

And so it can be for us, if we are as willing as Scrooge to change our ways—and here I am thinking more about society in general and not only individuals. As is widely known, but also downplayed by certain political leaders, climate scientists have issued dire warnings about the "shadows of things that Will be" unless significant changes are made.

An October headline in The Guardian cries out, "We have 12 years to limit climate change catastrophe, warns UN." These are shadows of things to come—but as Scrooge recognized, "if courses be departed from," things will change. Just as Tiny Tim didn't have to die because Scrooge became a benefactor of the Cratchit family, the looming global warming catastrophe can be averted by the human family changing its current course.

As Tiny Tim exclaims, "God Bless Us, Every One!"—and may God help us, every one, to alter the environmental future by making necessary changes in the new year.

A Dickens of a Good Story

Dr. Leroy Seat (December 20, 2012)

Charles Dickens was an English social critic and writer who is generally regarded as the greatest novelist of the Victorian era (1837-1901) in Great Britain. He was born two hundred years ago, in 1812, and is the author of such highly acclaimed novels as ***The Adventures of Oliver Twist*** (1837-39), ***David Copperfield*** (1848-50), and ***A Tale of Two Cities*** (1859).

The latter was required reading in my sophomore English class, but I was too young (or too immature) to appreciate it properly at the time. (It's a shame that much good literature is "ruined" by requiring students to read it before they are mature enough to do so effectively.)



A Christmas Carol is undoubtedly Dickens' most widely read work. It was written when he was a young man, in 1843. In contrast to his several quite long novels, ***A Christmas Carol*** is fairly short. And it is, indeed, a Dickens of a good story!

Through the years I have enjoyed various film versions of Dickens' novella, but this month I have just read the book again—and once again found it to be delightful. As is widely known, ***A Christmas Carol*** is basically about Ebenezer Scrooge, an affluent but pitiful old grouch in London.

Sour and stingy Scrooge is transformed, though, through visits of the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future. At the time the third Ghost first appears, he exclaims, "I hope to live to be another man from what I was." And change he does! From the tight-fisted employer seeking to get all he can out of Bob Cratchit, his long-suffering employee, he becomes a benefactor of the Cratchit family.

Because of Scrooge's help, Tiny Tim does not die, even though that is what Scrooge saw when he was with the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. He realizes that by changing he has the power to make a positive difference in the lives of people around him.

We now hear about "class warfare" from time to time, but the plight of the poor and the criticism of the rich has been around for a long time. That was a theme common in the writings of Charles Dickens. In his longer novels, he became an outspoken critic of unjust economic and social conditions.

There are many who think that helping the poor such as Scrooge ended up doing for the Cratchit family, should be mainly up to individuals, or groups of individuals such as churches. And certainly that is a very commendable thing for people to do.

Most employers, however, have more than one employee, and few can become as involved in the lives of their employees as Scrooge did.

During the Christmas season, much emphasis is placed on loving acts of kindness, including giving to the poor—as there should be. But we also need a system of social justice that operates all year long, not just during the Christmas season. As Joseph Fletcher significantly said in ***Situation Ethics***, "**justice is love distributed.**"

I hope this Christmas season, and thinking about the message in ***A Christmas Carol***, can encourage us all to be more generous in sharing with those less fortunate than us. Perhaps it can even help us feel happier to pay taxes that support social justice programs in our country.

*This essay was first published on December 20, 2012 on Dr. Seat's blog.

TheViewFromThisSeat.blogspot.com

Presented here by permission of the 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*

Leroy Seat, Ph.D
1307 Canterbury Ln
Liberty, MO 64068-3209
Telephone number: [\(816\) 429-5205](tel:8164295205)

Blog: <http://TheViewFromThisSeat.blogspot.com>
E-mail: LKSeat@gmail.com
Website: <http://www.4-lministries.net/>
Twitter: @LKSeat

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 Minnesota portion of Enbridge Line 3, Biden fail to stop.
Protect the Arctic Sanctuary from oil and gas drilling.
Protect National Parks and Monuments (Biden reverses Trump opening Bear Ears and Grand Staircase-Excalante to oil drilling, fracking, and mining,

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.

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.
Trans-continental 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)

Vaccines: Israel must provide Coronavirus vaccines to Palestinians in Gaza Strip.

GITMO: Close down Guantanamo Detention Center.

COUNCIL FOR PACIFIC ASIAN THEOLOGY

P. O. Box 7270, Alhambra, CA 91802

Honorary Chairpersons:

Rev. Dr. Paul M. (d.2019) and Florence Nagano
florencenagano@aol.com, Phone: 626-863-5140
(Atherton Baptist Homes)
801 W. Commonwealth Ave.#14, Alhambra CA 91801

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair/President: Dickson Kazuo Yagi
551 Harrison Ave., Claremont CA 91711
dkyagi@icloud.com; Phone: 909-788-7080

1st Vice President: Phil Shigekuni
16915 Labrador St., Northridge, CA 91343
pshig2000@verizon.net; Phone: 818-893-1581

Secretary/2nd Vice President: Michi Tanioka
216 S. Atlantic Blvd., Alhambra, CA 91801
michitanioka@gmail.com; Phone: 626-940-5834

Treasurer: Naomi Sasano
1822 W. Garvey Ave. #6, Alhambra, CA 91803
naomiw@netzero.net; Phone: (626) 524-5485

Financial Officer: Larry Naritomi
809 Browning Place, Monterey Park, CA 91755
ynaritomi@gmail.com; Phone (626)757-4822
Rev. Frederick Brenion
(Shinshu Buddhist, Higashi) fbrenion@gmail.com

Marion Shigekuni
pshig2000@verizon.net; Phone: 818-893-1581

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