



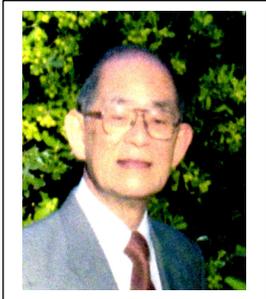
COUNCIL FOR PACIFIC ASIAN THEOLOGY (CPAT)

PACIFIC ASIAN VISION

VOLUME Thirty-six, Number 3, March, 2022. Editor: Dickson Kazuo Yagi

#1 Universal Mind : Conscience

Dickson Kazuo Yagi



Father

The primary model for God in the West is God the Father. Like a human father, God speaks to us with words, called the Bible. And we speak to God with words, called Prayer.

But I moved from Hawaii and lived in Japan for 31 years, teaching in a Japanese university. In East Asia, I saw a different face of God, not as a Father God who needs words.

Universal Mind

I saw God as **Universal Mind**. Universal Mind is plugged into our human minds automatically from our birth to death. That flow from Big Mind to our small minds is continuous, sometimes comforting, sometimes accusing like a policeman blowing his whistle, often called **conscience**. [Major Mahayana Philosophical School is *Yogachara*--mind only].

The Apostle Paul speaks of God and conscience in Romans 2:14-16. While God speaks to Jews through the **Law** (Old Testament), God speaks the same contents to Gentiles through **conscience** (the Law **written on our hearts**). What God speaks to Jews as a Father God through the words of the Torah (Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament) God as Universal Mind speaks the same contents to Gentiles as **conscience** without words; Universal mind plugged into human minds.

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; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them on the day when, according to my gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all. Romans 2:14-16. NRSV

Creation Story

In the creation story in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, God says, "Let there be light," and the light comes on. There is something wrong with this story.

First, before the light comes on, there needs to be a light bulb. Then there needs to be wires connecting this light bulb with a generator, a dam on a lake to produce hydroelectric power or maybe a nuclear power plant. Then there needs to be a switch.

You flick the switch on and the electric generator runs the electricity through the wires that connects with the light bulb. You need all this to happen before the light comes on. But in the Bible there is no light bulb, no wires, no electric generator. God simply says, “Let there be light,” and the light comes on. That is not God the Father; this is God as Universal Mind. God just thinks it, and it happens. Universal Mind—No need for words or light bulbs or wires or generator or a switch.

#2 God Laughing Our Laughs and Crying Our Tears

It is a mystery to men what women talk about on the telephone. When my daughter was a student at University of Hawaii, she phoned my wife in Japan, and talked for 45 minutes. When men talk on the telephone, we talk for 5 minutes and run out of things to say. It is a mystery to us men what women talk about for 45 minutes.

Many years later, my wife died. Then Miriam called. I felt so sorry because Mom was not there to listen to her. But guess what! She talked to me for 45 minutes until the telephone receiver got hot.

She gave me information about everything happening to her and to her grade school son, Ethan. Then she talked about her feelings—everything that made her happy and everything that made her worry, everything that made her sad. It took 45 minutes to say everything in her heart, good and bad. Often she calls during the last 3 minutes of a football game. But I never cut her off. Because that is what her mother, Ellen, would do. Listen to my daughter until she is all talked out.

The purpose of the phone call is not only to pass on information, but to clean out her heart of great joy, great worry, great sorrow. She tells everything happening to her son, Ethan. If she can clean out her heart once a month on the telephone, she never has to see a therapist.

So now I live 3 lives every day. I live my own life. I live Miriam’s life. And I live Ethan’s life. Miriam tells me everything happening in her life and Ethan’s life. So I live 3 lives everyday. I laugh all their laughs, I cry all their tears, and I worry all their worries.

It is a little different between me and God. I don’t have to tell God everything on the telephone. God is always plugged in as universal mind plugged in to my mind. God laughs all my laughs, cries all my tears, and worries all my worries. Even without a phone call, God as universal mind knows everything about me and about you and about all the joys and fears and worries that makes us human beings. **As Universal Mind God is plugged in Mind to mind.** I like this view of God promoted by Process Theology.

#3 Universal Mind: The Praying Hand

I learned the Praying Hand in church in the U. S. Just as we have 5 fingers on our hand, we have 5 kinds of prayer. The 5 kinds of prayer are: Confession, Praise, Thanksgiving, Petition (praying for myself), and Intercession (praying for others). Too anxious to talk to God in 5 different ways, we forgot one most important thing--to listen. With two ears and one mouth maybe we should listen twice as much as we talk?

But in Japan we had 7 day sessions called **sesshin** (touching the heart 接心) . Seven days in total silence with vegetarian meals. I sat in a monastery full of monks for 7 days of total silence, sitting 8 hours a day. At meals we spoke with hand gestures to stop them pouring when my tea cup was full, and stop filling my rice bowl when it was full. You could see the hand gesture. You could also hear the slight sound of skin on skin in the gesture. All this to maintain total silence even during meal time.

We practiced only one kind of prayer--listen. listen, listen. Beginning with 7 days of silent listening, it was extended to a whole lifetime of listening. I have been listening for some 45 years. Why should God want to hear me talk, if God is **universal mind** plugged into human mind? The name of the game is to feel with God, think with God, love with God, cry with God, and act with God—no words needed.

#4 Universal Mind: Conscience and Bible

"**Conscience**" appears 31 times, and "**conscienc**es" once in the Bible. Curiously all 32 appearances are in the New Testament, never in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). In the older more primitive Old Testament layers "**ecstatic prophets**" would fall into trances, foam at the mouth, roll on the ground, become possessed by another spirit, and pronounce oracles from the spirit world. Even King Saul was overcome, rolling on the ground, possessed by some other spirit. These "ecstatic prophets" were feared by the unpredictability of what they might say while possessed. Yet kings and warriors heading into battle could demand that a respected prophet go into trance and assure them of victory before they headed into battle.

In Japan such a female shaman named Himiko/Pimiko is recognized by earliest Chinese records as a ruler in Japan in lists of subject societies paying regular tribute to China. Shamans were in competition for ruling power against organized priests and gangs of warriors. As societies matured, the dependable rituals of priests and protection by warrior gangs overcame the unpredictable oracles

of ecstatic shamans. In Japan the remnants of the smashed role of ancient shamans now remain only as female students hired for part time work during Shinto festivals, often daughters of priests.

In later Old Testament times the unpredictable **ecstatic prophets** were gradually replaced by predictable **ethical prophets** committed to sacred values of loyalty to God and protecting the poor and abused against the rich--priest and kings. Also the ecstatic nature of prophesy--being possessed, foaming at the mouth and rolling on the ground--is replaced by more spiritual values enhanced by "**the Spirit of God**" and "**the Word of God**". "**The ecstatic prophets**" are replaced by "**the ethical prophets**". Jesus does not foam at the mouth, and roll on the ground. Rather he is filled and led by the Spirit of God.

New Testament times is marked by military conquests of the Roman Empire spreading Greek (Hellenistic) culture. A contagious Greek ethical, psychological value is "**conscience**". **Con**="with" + **science** = "knowledge." That is, with knowledge of good, right, compassionate action. Or **with knowledge of God**.

So within the New Testament the writers use the word "conscience" as a universally accepted and honored value--a non-Jewish concept accepted through the spread of Greek Hellenistic culture. The Apostle Paul raised in Greek culture even exalts the role of **conscience to Gentiles** as equal to the **Law to Jews**.

#5 Universal Mind: Conscience and Interfaith Dialogue

About 10 years ago we were invited for dialogue with a brilliant leader of the **Islamic Center of Southern California** on Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles. We were the **Nikkei Interfaith Fellowship**, ministers and friends of all Japanese Religions, including Buddhists, Shintoists, and Christians. He was experienced in dialogue with Christians, but had no idea how to relate to Buddhists. All Islamic and Christian terminology would not relate to Buddhists and Shintoists. I had taught Introduction to World Religions in the university for years. I said, "**Conscience**." He got excited and said, "Of course, conscience." Conscience had become a central religious concept in all major religions of the modern world. All major religions can relate their sacred texts and traditions to conscience. Conscience for Japanese Buddhists and Shintoists is "Ryōshin 良心."

#6 Universal Mind: Emil Brunner and Conscience

Heinrich Emil Brunner (1889-1966) was a Swiss Reformed theologian during and after WW2. He became a major influence in my graduate studies and dissertation. Emil Brunner is usually paired with Karl Barth in guiding the Neo-orthodox movement in the post World War II era. Barth was the

conservative edge, limiting Christian revelation to Jesus Christ, while Brunner was a moderating buffer, allowing space for **natural revelation** in addition to Jesus Christ.

Emil Brunner elevated conscience as the **key to human life**. God speaks to humans through conscience. We can run away from God. We can run away from the police. But we cannot run away from conscience. Conscience is the policeman blowing his whistle within our hearts. Conscience defines humans as the unique creature that lives in response to the voice of God. When we look into the eyes of a human and fail to sense a response to conscience, we are terrified that this person with a human body is not a real human being, but maybe a monster unaware. Brunner defines human beings as those who live in response to conscience. Because we **respond** to conscience, we are **responsible**.

A missionary couple in Japan decided to resign. After thorough investigation it was determined that their son, a youth, did not have a conscience. But professional specialists were able to convince the couple that it was not the fault of their parenting. It was a rare defect of genetics. So the missionary couple did not resign. Every person has times when he fails to obey conscience, but it would be tragic and a horror if we never heard the voice of conscience at all.

There are anthropologists who find the difference between humans and apes as the human development of a thumb, or development of knees that lock for true upright walking, or expansion of the fore-brain to develop abstract thinking. To these physical insights, Emil Brunner would add a spiritual dimension--the dimension of conscience as the voice of God.

#7 Universal Mind: the Trinity

On a mountain in rural Kumamoto Province on the southern island of Kyushu is a retreat center, **Shinmeizan** (Mountain of New Life) run by Catholic Missionary Father Franco Sottocornola, a former Professor of Liturgy in Italian seminaries. He speaks five languages fluently. Rejecting the traditional missionary strategy of converting Japanese by rejection of Buddhism and Shinto, Father Franco came to Japan by a vision of "**Friendship Evangelism**." That is, recruiting Japanese to Christ by friendship and confirming cooperation with Buddhism and Shinto.

A main building in the retreat center is an authentic Zen meditation hall build to exact Zen Buddhist specifications. He holds authentic Zen sitting sessions once or twice a day for all monks and nuns of Shinmeizan. On the property is also a Center of Studies in Japanese Religions. There are also individual huts for people seeking days of meditation. I bring my students from Fukuoka to Shinmeizan every year (a 2 hour drive) to experience Zen meditation and to see Christianity in harmony with Buddhist and Shinto spirituality. Of course, this is not lost on Buddhist and Shinto clergy who come up the mountain to visit.

An American Catholic monk working with Father Franco for several years talked to me about how it felt to spend hours daily in Zen Buddhist silent meditations. No words because it is Universal Mind plugged into human minds. Westerners who speak words to God the Father and words to Jesus the Son, may feel alienated by Universal Mind--spirituality without words. But then nobody speaks words to the Holy Spirit. **Universal Mind** is right in center of the Christian Trinity as the **Holy Spirit**. We are led by the Spirit. We are filled by the Spirit. We are comforted by the Spirit. We are inspired by the Spirit. But we do not speak words to the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit of the West is Universal Mind of the East, right in the middle of our Trinity. There is one Protestant church that centers not on God the Father, nor on God the Son, but centers on the Holy Spirit. It is the Quakers (Society of Friends) worshipping just 5 minutes down Harrison Avenue, going west from our retirement center. Several Zen scholars from Japan, coming to America happened to visit Quaker silent worship on a Sunday. How pleasantly surprised they were coming from Universal Mind of the East to a gathering of Quakers waiting on the Holy Spirit of the West. The heart of Quaker worship is Silence. Unbelievably surprised they said, "Same thing!"

One evening at a Methodist Church, a famous Muslim musician performed and I, a Southern Baptist theology teacher, was his host in discussions of persecution of Jews. We bonded in heart in such warm friendship. Why would a Southern Baptist and a Muslim feel bonded as brothers? Upon further conversation we found out that I also was grounded for decades in Zen sittings and that he was a Sufi. That is, we were both mystics of silence. Of course, we both in our own traditions were given to absorbing the Sacred Spirit in silence--a lifetime practice of Universal Mind or Holy Spirit. I wish I were smarter, more charming, and told better jokes. But why not just be myself anyway as led by the Spirit, warts and all. **Universal Mind is Holy Spirit.**

Dickson K. Yagi (屋宜和夫) 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 from David Kalupahana (Theravada), David Chappell, and Alfred Bloom (both Mahayana).

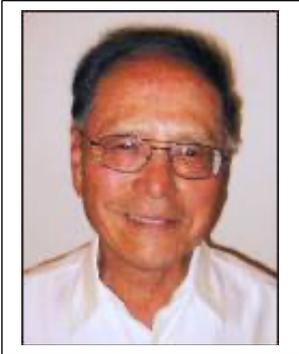
Dickson taught for some 27 years at Seinan Gakuin University in Fukuoka, where he is Prof. Emeritus in Christian Studies. He served a term as Head Chaplain of the university. For a decade he was a member of **Tōzai Shūkyō Kōryū Gakkai**, an advanced level of Buddhist Christian Dialogue mainly by university 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

SENIOR MOMENTS

Day of Remembrance, Feb. 19, 2022

By Phil Shigekuni



When EO 9066 was signed 80 years ago, I was 2 months short of turning 8. We lived, in what I found out years later, the Seinan area. My older sister, Evelyn (or as she prefers to be called, “Evie”), and my divorced mother, Lillian, were put on a bus and, with shades drawn, taken to Santa Anita.

The six months we spent there were not memorable, except for the time on Sundays when Christian services were held in the grandstands. Sitting there I was able to look out at the distant mountains and fantasize about being free from the dismal barracks where we were housed. The lively Christian choruses we sang provided some measure of comfort.

In 2003, I was able to get money from a state fund that was set aside from redress money to produce a DVD featuring four Christian ministers who played important roles during these troubling times: Bishop Roy Sano was about 12, and was sent with his family to Gila River in Arizona. At the time of the interview, Bishop Sano had recently retired as bishop of the California Pacific Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Rev. Paul Nagano and Rev. John Miyabe were about 20/21. They ministered in one of the three camps in Poston, Arizona.

Rev. Sam Tonomura lived in Canada and was sent to a farming area with his mother. In Canada the men were separated from their families and sent to labor camps.

At the start of our discussion we talked about our meeting in the grandstands in Santa Anita. When I mentioned the encouragement I got from singing Christian choruses, I was surprised that the men remembered them. At the suggestion of one of the men, we joined in together to sing one of the songs, “Are We Downhearted?”

Are we downhearted? No, no, no!

Are we downhearted? No, no, no!

Troubles may come and troubles may go — our trust is Jesus, come weal or woe.

Are we downhearted? (the tune is whistled) Are we downhearted? (the tune whistled again)

No, no, no!

This DVD is entitled “Comforting the Afflicted,” and thanks to a friend, David Osako, it was put on YouTube. To see it, type in “www.youtube.com,” then enter “Comforting the Afflicted-Phil Shigekuni.”

Especially if you were in a camp [concentration camp], I think you will enjoy seeing this part of our history.

*Phil Shigekuni writes from San Fernando Valley and can be contacted at pshig2000@verizon.net. This essay was first published in **the Rafu Shimpo**, major Japanese newspaper in So. California and published here by permission of author. Phil Shigekuni is 1st Vice President of **Council for Pacific Asian Theology (CPAT)**.*

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 29 years. He writes a column regularly in the Rafu Shimpo, largest Japanese newspaper in So. CA.

ONE EYE ON THE BIBLE; THE OTHER EYE ON THE NEWS



This new Filipinotown Eastern Gateway will be installed in May to establish a visible landmark for Filipinotown, Los Angeles. The construction cost is \$587,000. Rafu Shimpo. March 6, 22.

**Grand Opening Terasaki Budokan, Little Tokyo, LA
March 12, 2022, 10 am - 6 pm
New Center for Japanese Community
Especially Vital Youth Sports Leagues**



Tai Chi at Terasaki Budokan, Little Tokyo



Matsubayashi Karate

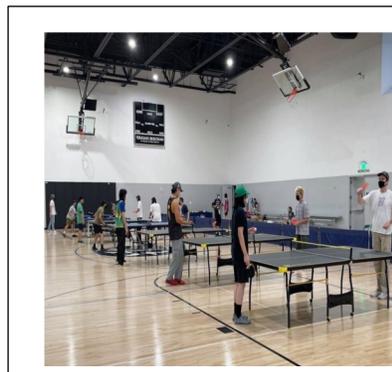


Table Tennis



Key Basketball, Volleyball
Tournaments

(Supporting role of Little Tokyo Service Center
led by Bill Watanabe)

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 LBGTQ. (Supreme Court ruled LBGTQ cannot be fired from work for being gay. Biden renews LBGTQ 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 and Jim Crow.
 Trans-continental railway built on blood, sweat, and tears of Chinese laborers.

Big Pharma: drug prices negotiated down.

Ghost Guns Destroyed

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 mass 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.
 Freedom for Myanmar citizens from military dictatorship.

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).

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, subsidized child care)

Vaccines: Israel must provide Coronavirus vaccines to Palestinians in Gaza Strip. Rich Western nations must share supply of vaccines with African nations, Pacific Islanders, and Palestinians in Gaza.

GITMO: Close Guantanamo Detention Center.

Free Assange as Whistle Blower.

Subscriptions to this booklet, *Pacific Asian Vision*, is free.

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