



COUNCIL FOR PACIFIC ASIAN THEOLOGY (CPAT)

**PACIFIC ASIAN VISION**

VOLUME Thirty-six, Number 5, May 2022. Editor: Dickson Kazuo Yagi, Ph.D.



**JESUS AND BONHOEFFER**

Why are we fighting Russia in Ukraine? Didn't Jesus teach us to love our enemies, pray for our enemies, and forgive our enemies? And Jesus died for his enemies?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was executed by hanging in Nazi Germany because he was involved in a plot to assassinate Hitler. Why didn't Bonhoeffer love his enemy, Hitler, as Jesus taught?

Jesus taught us to love our enemies in **personal ethics** with our neighbor. But Hitler was an enemy in **national ethics**. He invaded nations in Europe, attacked Russia, and carried out vicious air bombing of England.

So, Jesus is our hero in personal ethics, but Bonhoeffer is our hero in national ethics. In national ethics we need our **police** to protect us against criminals, and we need our **military** to protect us against military invasion.

We need to love our enemies, but don't we need to love our friends, families, and our nation, too? What do you think?

*Rev. Dickson "Kazu" Yagi*

**For those who like to think:**

1. The U.S. doubling and tripling our military aid to Ukraine has changed the war from helping Ukraine to **a proxy war** of the U.S. against Russia with Ukraine as the U.S. proxy? No U.S. soldiers are dying, and no U.S. cities are being destroyed so this proxy war is very convenient if seen from this uncomfortable angle.
2. How will the face of the war change if China enters the war as Putin's ally?
3. Realists fear Russia in desperation might use chemical, biological, or tactical atomic weapons. Putin has openly threatened use of nuclear weapons.

\* May God, Allah, Buddha, Akua, and Kamisama have mercy on us all!

## YAHWEH = AMIDA BUDDHA

The most important name for God in Judaism and in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) is represented by the four consonants YHWH. The consensus of scholars throughout several centuries in adding appropriate vowels to YHWH is the name **Yahweh**. An alternative form used in the King James Bible is **Jehovah**. Yahweh is a form of the verb "**haya**," meaning "to be alive." That would make Yahweh to mean "He who makes all things alive" --the Life Force.

As a Christian, my God is the miraculous spark of life, the "**elan vital**" of French philosopher, Henri Bergson, precursor of Alfred North Whitehead. "Reverence for Life" was central to the faith of Albert Schweitzer, early medical missionary to Lambarene, French Equatorial Africa.

Well, it so happens that similar conclusions are being formed about Amida Buddha as expressed by Shinran, founder of Shin Buddhism. There are two fundamental names of Amida--one is the name **Amitayus**, **Immeasurable Life** (無量壽). 壽 *kotobuki* (long life) simplified in modern Japanese is written as 寿.

The foundational story of Amida Buddha is the narrative of the 48 vows of Dharmakara Bodhisattva found in **The Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life** (The Larger *Sukhavati Vyuha Sutra*). The story is told by Gautama Buddha somewhere in the heavens to many thousands of Buddhas.

A Shin Buddhist minister explaining Amida Buddha to Christians neglected to tell this story of the 48 vows. I confronted him saying that without the story of the 48 vows, his explanation of Pure Land faith sounded exactly like Zen Buddhism. He was embarrassed as he confessed that he avoids telling the story of the 48 vows to Christians because it sounds too much like a **fairy tale**. This must be a serious problem in telling the story of the 48 vows to 21st century students with their modern scientific world view.

Then about 10 years ago the Headquarters of Higashi Honganji, Eastern Branch, in Kyoto decided on a slogan for the gigantic celebration of the 750th anniversary of the death of Shinran Shonin. (宗祖親鸞聖人 750 回御遠忌テーマ).

The slogan was: "**Now, Life is living you.**" (Ima, Inochi ga anata o ikite iru). Without any embarrassing traces of a fairy-tale, the slogan bravely and directly identifies Amida with **Life**. That is, Amida is living through Buddhists, even though they might only be conscious of their own self-centered concerns--me, myself, and I. Of course, this has exciting parallels for Christians—that the Living Christ is living through Christians.

What surprises await me when I cross over into the next world? I just made 85 years. Life expectancy in the U.S. is 77. I should have died 8 years ago. I welcome all good surprises of faith in this life and the next. **Yahweh = Amida Buddha!** Makes the hairs on the back of my neck stand up.

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## SEEING GOD

Hawaii had missionaries during World War 2 because Japan and China missionaries were kicked out of Asia. These U.S. missionaries came to Hawaii for the duration of the war because Hawaii was full of Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans who were mainly Buddhists. My family was Koyasan Shingon Buddhists.

Missionaries called us heathen. Missionaries told us that believing in God was the most important thing. Why didn't we believe in God? We could not go to heaven if we were so ungrateful as to refuse to believe in God.

But I decided it was all God's fault that we did not believe. Why is God hiding from us? If God showed up in our Hilo Ho'olulu Park every Sunday, we would all believe. If God protected Hilo Bay from the three tidal waves that devastated 1/3 of the town, everybody would believe. My Dad's grocery store is right off Hilo Bay. It was destroyed three times by tidal waves.

My Uncle Ernest was killed in the Korean War. Why didn't God protect such a good person as Uncle Ernest? It is God's fault that we don't believe.

In my senior years I have changed my mind again. I see God everywhere. Every morning I feed Garuda, a yellow Finch songbird, who happily sings for me an hour every day. I feed 4 beautiful goldfish in a huge barrel in my back yard. They are five years old, vigorous, and playful. I also water 3 flourishing potted plants in the house. Why is anything alive? Why is the finch, the goldfish, and the plants alive? Why am I alive? Life is a miracle. And that miracle is God. Or whatever you call God in your religion.

Dogs and cats can become our best friends. But human beings are the best windows to see God. Mom and Dad, teachers, coaches, teammates in sports, partners in business, married couples. I see God in every person I meet.

Jainism, the oldest religion in India, preaches *Ahimsa*, reverence for life. This has penetrated all religions in India. *Ahimsa* may be the unspoken foundation of all Buddhist ethics. Albert Schweitzer is the famous early missionary of modern medicine to Africa. "Reverence for life" was his main religious concern. "Reverence for life" is perhaps 80% of my religion.

I see God in the whales, the tiger, the elephant, and the lava shooting up in Halemau'au crater on the Big Island. But the best window to see God is in the faces and hearts of human beings. In my old age, I see God everywhere. People searching for God are watching you and me. I see God in you. Can you see God in me?

*Rev. Dickson Kazuo Yagi*



## OLD MEN WILL DREAM DREAMS

By Bill Watanabe

from Rafu Shimpo, 5.10.22

by permission of author

The Terasaki Budokan had its grand opening celebration on March 19, 2022, which was attended by a couple of thousand happy folks and it was a grand time! I hope you don't mind if I beat my chest a little bit longer about this momentous event and ruminate about the significance of this accomplishment.

The Bible has a passage that says "your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams." When I was a relatively young man back in 1994 and on the staff of the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC), we caught the vision that we needed to build a gymnasium to help secure the future existence of our historic Little Tokyo neighborhood. This vision entailed a sports and activity center that would attract ethnic youth and families as well as other visitors to Little Tokyo and in turn help support the local businesses as well as facilities such as the or Japanese American Cultural & Community Center (JACCC) and Japanese American National Museum.

Being young entails being optimistic and hopeful and perhaps even audacious with the idea that a project, no matter how daunting, can be accomplished if the community has the will and determination. And there was very little doubt that this was a project that was supported by everyone in the Nikkei community – which included the hundreds of basketball and volleyball teams and dozens of martial arts dojos.

However, visions of building a gym in Little Tokyo had existed since the early 1920s, when the ethnic neighborhood was growing and Nisei youngsters were literally running through the streets. A gym was actually proposed back in the 1970s as part of the JACCC campus but was never built. In 1994, it was time to try to make the vision a reality.

The first major obstacle was finding a Little Tokyo location that was large enough for a multi-court gym. From 1994 to 2000, we were stymied many times at obtaining a property for the project. However, there was a growing awareness of the total lack of parks, playgrounds and recreational facilities in the area, which made the vision grow even stronger.

In 2000, Councilwoman Jan Perry pledged to help find a city-owned property and finally, in the year 2008, a location was procured on Los Angeles Street near the Little Tokyo Library. The vision was one major step closer to reality!

The second major obstacle was raising the funds necessary for construction of a large facility with high ceilings and no central columns. Raising the funds became an elusive goal as the construction costs kept rising each month, but the LTSC board and staff, along with many, many donors and funders, kept the vision alive.

Construction was at long last completed in 2021 and even though COVID delayed the grand opening until March of 2022, the vision had become real after 28 years of effort.



Now I, as an “old man,” can dream dreams — of what the Budokan will mean to the community in the coming years. I dream about this facility in Little Tokyo and imagine myriads of young and older folks engaging in activities where they can develop healthy bodies and learn important life skills such as practicing and hard work, building teamwork, improving focus and self-discipline.

I can dream of individuals and families connecting with the Little Tokyo community and investing in and ensuring its future.

I dream dreams of a new future that is the promise of the Terasaki Budokan.

May young people continue to have visions, and may old people continue to dream dreams.

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Bill Watanabe is the founding Executive Director of the Little Tokyo Service Center. Since 1980 he has guided its growth, in conjunction with the Board of Directors, from a one-person staff to a multi-faceted social services and community development program with 150 paid staff, many of whom are bilingual in any of eight Asian Pacific languages and Spanish.

Bill received his Masters in Social Welfare from UCLA in 1972. He has been married for 36 years, and has one daughter, and lives near downtown Los Angeles, only a short drive to his ethnic neighborhood of Little Tokyo.





## WHAT ABOUT THE IMMIGRANTS?

by Leroy Seat, PhD.

from Dr. Seats blog, May 5, 2022  
Published here by authors permission

### What about the Immigrants?

Immigration has long been a perplexing problem in this country. Tomorrow is the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chinese Exclusion Act, the first significant law restricting immigration into the U.S. But immigration continues to be a contentious and divisive issue.



### Fear of Immigrants

"Yellow Peril" is a racist term that depicted the peoples of East and Southeast Asia as an existential threat to the Western world.

In the U.S., the racist and cultural stereotypes of the Yellow Peril originated in the 19th century, when Chinese workers, who legally entered the U.S., inadvertently provoked a racist backlash because of their work ethic and willingness to work for lower wages than did the local white populations.

Construction of the first transcontinental railroad in the U.S. began in 1863—in the middle of the Civil War. The completion of that challenging endeavor was celebrated with the driving of the “golden spike” on May 10, 1869, an event captured in this much-publicized photograph:



Photo by Andrew J. Russell

What is missing in the image is even one Chinese worker, although some 15,000 Chinese laborers helped build the western part of that railroad (see this informative [July 2019 article](#) from *The Guardian*)—and 1,200 died in the process.

In the following decade, resentment against Chinese laborers in the U.S. bloated, especially in California, and President Arthur signed the Chinese Exclusion Act on May 6, 1882. Seeking to stem the Yellow Peril, that Act prohibited the immigration of any more Chinese laborers.

### **Exploitation of Immigrants**

There has long been exploitation of immigrants by capitalists. The treatment of the Chinese railroad laborers is one of the first clear examples. Even after 1882, though, throngs of European immigrants came to this country to work in hard jobs with minimal pay and harsh living conditions.

Some bestselling novels depicted the exploitation of such immigrants. For example, Upton Sinclair's 1906 novel *The Jungle* featured the plight of immigrants in the Chicago stockyards and meat-packing industry.

The hard lot of European immigrants working in the Michigan copper mines in 1913-14 are depicted in Mary Doria Russell's captivating novel *The Women of Copper Country* (2019). (This was the first and the best of the twelve novels I have read so far this year.)

And while John Steinbeck's powerful novel *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) is mostly about domestic migrants, the "Okies" who went to California in the 1930s, in the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter he wrote the following about the capitalists engaged in agribusiness:

Now farming became industry . . . . They imported slaves, although they did not call them slaves: Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, Filipinos. . . . [The businessmen said,] They don't need much. They wouldn't know what to do with good wages. Why, look how they live. Why, look what they eat. And if they get funny—deport them.

### **Fear of Immigrants Again**

And now in 2022 there is considerable opposition to—and latent fear of—immigrants coming across the southern border of the United States.

Granted, the present opposition is ostensibly because such immigrants are "illegal," but many are coming for the same reason so many Europeans came in the past: the hope for a better standard of living—and until 1924 there was little legal restriction except for Chinese laborers.

The current immigration debate in the U.S. (and many European countries) is between the liberal globalists and the conservative/populist nationalists. The former wants a liberal



immigration policy partly out of compassion for the needy and partly to promote a multi-cultural, interdependent world.

On the other hand, the nationalists want to protect the well-being of the people of their own country, but often with callous disregard for the needs of those desperate to find safer places to live and a place with better economic conditions.

There are certainly many in this country who strongly side with the nationalists, and Donald Trump's appeal to them was one of the reasons he was elected President in 2016.\*

But as a Christian, I can't help but side with those showing the most compassion for the immigrants. After all, in Matthew 25:35 Jesus said, "*I was a stranger and you welcomed me.*"\*\*

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\* In October 2019, [PBS aired \*Zero Tolerance\*](#), a documentary about how Steve Bannon used the immigration issue to help get Trump the nomination for the presidency in 2016 and how Trump used that as part of his MAGA appeal that resulted in his election.

\*\* The Greek word translated here as "stranger" is ξένος (*xenos*), from which the English word xenophobia (=fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners) comes.

Dr. Leroy Seat and I studied 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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## 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 and Jim Crow.  
Trans-continental railway built on blood, sweat, and tears of Chinese laborers.

### Big Pharma: drug prices negotiated down.

### Destroy Ghost Guns

### 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

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

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