



GASSHO

April
2013

Issue No: 04-13

"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"



ON HANAMATSURI AND EASTER

by rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

This year Easter was on the thirty-first of March, a Sunday. Ever since New England missionaries began arriving in Hawaii in 1820, Judeo-Christianity came to be indelibly imbedded in Hawaiian culture and later compromised by modernization, post modernity and now by the age of space exploration. This influence of Judaism and Christianity can be seen on the back of our dollar bills. Have you ever wondered as to how or why the "six-pointed star of David" ("Seal of Solomon") comprised of thirteen stars came to be set above the "bald eagle" imprinted on the back of the dollar bill? Below this star, the American bald eagle with its outstretched wings is holding an olive branch with thirteen olives in its right talons (offering peace) while grasping thirteen arrows in its left (threatening war).

Let us now examine Francis Bellamy's "Pledge of Allegiance." It originally read: "*I pledge allegiance to the flag and Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.*" As it was the intention of the Founding Fathers to keep religion separate and out of State and governmental affairs, originally, the pledge did not have the words "*under God.*" The Founders were deists who believed in "freedom of choice" and "freedom of religion." They intended to keep matters of governance from coming under the control of any one single institutionalized religion.

Therefore, the word "*God*" was not in it. The words "*the United States of America*" later replaced the word "*Republic.*" Then, it was during Eisenhower's presidency (1951-1961) that the words "*under God*" were added. It was not until 1956 that the phrase "*In God we trust*" was officially adopted as the motto of the United States. However "*In God we Trust*" was already being imprinted on our coins when Congress passed the Coinage Act

MONTH'S THOUGHT



... the multiplicity and differences that distinguish individuals are ... but appearances. They exist, that is to say, only in my mental representation.... My own true inner being actually exists in every living creature as truly and immediately as known to my consciousness only in myself. The realization, for which the standard formula in Sanskrit is *tat tvam asi*, is the ground of that compassion ... upon which all true, that is to say unselfish virtue rests whose expression is in every good deed. — Joseph Campbell. *Inner Reaches of Outer Space*. p. 84.



in 1873. Then, in 1957 these words began to be imprinted on our paper money.

The thirteen American colonies declared their independence from Britain on July 4, 1776. This means that the United States is merely 237 years old. Contrary to popular belief, the Founding Fathers were not monotheists, as were the Pilgrims and Puritans who were basically theocentric Calvinists. According to Joseph Campbell, deists believe in the natural harmony of what exists as verifiable through "reasoned analysis" and "empirical verification," and not through some self proclaimed "mystical revelations" or "miraculous interventions." Deists do not believe in a God who displays "human like preferences and aversions" in deciding the final fate of things. (See Joseph Campbell. *Inner Reaches of Outer Space*. pp. 95-100.)

Now, in looking at the months of February, March and April of this year, we see Judaic and

REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICES FOR APRIL 2013

1st SUN Apr 7th:

HAWAII BUDDHIST COUNCIL'S

Hanamatsuri Service

No services at SKM
Please attend HBC Service
at

Honpa Hongwanji Betsuin

2nd SUN Apr 14th:

Shinshu Kyokai's Hanamatsuri Service

9 A.M. English Service
Rev. Tatsuguchi

"The Fifth Dimension!"

3rd SUN Apr 21st:

9 A.M. Eng. Service
Dharma Talk
For Children & Adults
Rev. Tatsuguchi

4th SUN Apr 28th:

MONTHLY FAMILY WORSHIP

9 A.M. Eng. Service
Dharma Talk
For Children & Adults
Rev. Tatsuguchi

2013 Memorial Service Schedule

2012	1 Year	1997	17 Year
2011	3 Year	1989	25 Year
2007	7 Year	1981	33 Year
2001	13 Year	1964	50 Year
	1914	100 Year	

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

KARAOKE SINGERS CLUB Mon 7 - 9 p.m.
Mr. Nelson Yoshioka

KARATE CLASSES Tues & Fri 6 - 8 p.m.
Shihan - Walter Nishioka

FUJINKAI LADIES' FELLOWSHIP GROUP
Wed 9 a.m. - noon

With Deepest Sympathy

Raymond M. Kawano 86 yrs. Jan. 23, 2013

Jean M. Hamamoto 95 yrs. Feb. 23, 2013

Norma S. Kageura 96 yrs. Feb. 24, 2013

Carol S. Okazaki 78 yrs. Feb. 28, 2013

SKM New Year Party Prizes

1st prize (TV) **Jeremy Okihara**

2nd prize (microwave) **Kay Ono**

3rd prize (wireless **Earl Tanna**

3-handset AT&T phone)

THANK YOU

for YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS !!

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Christian holidays listed. However, Hanamatsuri is not listed. The Hawaii Buddhist Council sponsors the Hanamatsuri on the Sunday nearest to the eighth of April. This year the eighth of April falls on a Monday. So, this year's Hanamatsuri will be celebrated on Sunday, the seventh of April.

Valentine's Day originally was observed in memory of St. Valentine who was executed by the Romans for ministering to Christians being persecuted by the Romans. There seem to have been several St. Valentines (*Valentinus*). Obviously, communion services have nothing to do with lovers offering gifts of flowers and confectionary to express their affection for each other.

In the Roman Catholic Church, Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent, the period of preparation for the resurrection of Jesus Christ which is said to fall on an Easter Sunday. Lent is a forty-day period of prayer and fasting. Ash Wednesday derives its name from the practice of rubbing ashes on the forehead of faithful adherents as a sign of their mourning and repentance to God.

St. Patrick's Day was celebrated this year on Sunday, the seventeenth of March. St. Patrick is regarded as a patron saint in Ireland. Celebrants usually wear green. Green symbolizes also the "Green Man," for with the arrival of Spring comes the green budding leaves on tree branches that the April showers bring as the plants begin sprouting and flowers begin budding and blooming once again in all their glory, to then bring the fruits with their seeds that sprout once again come next Spring. So, life goes on, it "never dies."

Palm Sunday commemorates the triumphal entrance of Christ into Jerusalem on a donkey as palm branches were placed in his path (Matthew 21:1-9). He was arrested on Holy Thursday and crucified on Friday. Thus, Palm Sunday marks the final week of Lent, the week in which Christians celebrate the mystery of Christ's Crucifixion on Friday and his Resurrection on Easter Sunday.

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WORDS OF SHINRAN

At every moment, in all of us who are foolish and ignorant, greed and desire constantly defile any goodness of heart, and anger and hatred incessantly consume the dharma treasure. Though we rush to act, rush to perform practices as though driving fire away from our heads, all our deeds must be termed good acts poisoned and irresolute, acts empty, transitory, and false; they cannot be called true, real, and sincere. Aspire though one may to attain birth in the Land of Immeasurable light through such empty, transitory, and poisoned good acts, it is altogether impossible. *Kyogyoshinsho*. SSZ II. 62 (quoted in Notes on Once-calling and Many-calling). p. 6. SBS Translation Series.

Easter Sunday, therefore, is said to be the culmination of Christ's passion, or what was the unbearable sequence of his physical, mental and spiritual anguish and final death nailed on a cross as the Lamb of God that was foreordained by his Father, God in heaven. The crucifixion itself, said St. Paul, has no meaning without Jesus' resurrection and final ascension back to his Father in heaven. These beliefs are central tenets in a Christian's faith. Jesus' immaculate conception as the Only Begotten Son of God is also a central article of Christian faith.

April Fool's Day, or All Fool's Day, has no religious or national significance. However, it is widely recognized and celebrated as a day when people play practical jokes and hoaxes on each other just for the fun of it. Many now have no recollection of Orson Welles' hoax that set Americans into a panic and mass hysteria concerning a supposed invasion by aliens from space. Today the topic of UFOs continues. This phenomenon seems to be connected to biblical verses concerning fallen angels falling in love and impregnating human females.

The May Pole around which people dance actually symbolizes the "Tree of Life." In ancient times "majestic tall trees" served as a symbol for the phallus (magical staff, rod or wand). The phallus of course is the source of the "white seeds" that impregnate the "red seed" that has to be in season in a woman's Fallopian tubes (fertilization process). This symbolism of the phallus evolved into such things like the Washington Monument and, it may

surprise you, as well as the towering steeples and spires on church and temple roof tops.

So, interestingly, the word *Asherah* is Hebrew for a "sacred wooden tree" or tree pole like the totem pole. "Ashera" also is the Greek "*Astarte*," a Babylonian goddess of the seas. She also was worshipped as the mother of several if not all gods and goddesses, such as Baal, a "sun god." These gods and goddesses were carved out of evergreen trees. They were, first and foremost, fertility gods of the spring equinox. Canaanites worshipped them by sacrificing human beings, preferably first-born innocent children as pure unblemished burnt offerings to Baal and his consort Astarte. (See Arnold Toynbee, *An Historian's Approach to Religion*. pp. 39-40.) Canaanite children often also hunted for eggs because eggs were symbols of sexuality, fertility and new life. So, the word *Asherah* comes from Astarte that became Easter, a goddess with multiple signs of female sexuality and fecundity, or lots of eggs.

In India the phallus and vagina are often depicted together with the *lingam* (phallus – male creative energy) sculptured as protruding right out of the very center of the *yonis* (vagina and womb – female creative energy). This co-symbolization looks much like the single petaled white lily with its stamen protruding right out from its very center, and also an Anthurium with its stamen protruding from out of its very center. However, *yin* and *yang* in Taoism are presented as a formalized circular symbol of Oneness in which the union of masculine and feminine principles are depicted to be in harmonious and inseparable togetherness like the negative and positive currents of electricity that lights up a light bulb. Thus, Light and Life are inseparable as are the electrical currents that light up a light bulb.

Now, to this day, there is a continuing controversy as to whether Jesus was "impaled" on a stake, or "tied," "hung" or "nailed" to a plank, or a tree (see Acts 5:33), or on a Roman "T" cross or on a "†" cross (Acts 5:30). At any rate, execution by crucifixion in Roman times was designed to publically humiliate the person being crucified who was either hung, tied or nailed to a tree, a pole, a plank or a cross. He was left hanging completely naked to expose him to the elements and especially for public viewing and ridicule. According to ancient historians, the victim suffered an excruciating slow, painful death over several days. Therefore, the victim naturally suffered in the stench of his own bodily excrements from some three to seven days.

Crucifixion, therefore, was a most ghastly and horrendous way to humiliate a criminal by public execution.

The biblical rejection and condemnation of the "body" as being an instrument of sensuality and carnality is based on its one-sided affirmation of the "soul" as being an autonomous "spiritual" entity and distinctly independent of the body that is lustful. This is clearly seen in the words of Jesus as follows:

If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. Matthew 5:29.

Whether these words are to be literally or allegorically taken, the imagery presented, nevertheless, certainly differs from the words of Sakyamuni, who said:

All the Buddhas teach the same truth. They point out the Path to those who go astray! To cease from evil; to cultivate the good; **to cleanse our own thoughts**; to help others. This is the teaching of the Buddhas. *Dhammapada* 4. In *Praises of the Buddha*, p.157. In bold for emphasis.

These words of Sakyamuni, by contrast, point out the crucial importance for a person to first cleanse her or his own innermost thoughts (and emotions) even before she or he tries to help others.

These words of the Buddha also differ from Jesus' words concerning the "beam" in one's own "eye" compared to "the speck of dust" in another's "eye" (Matt. 7:3). This point, whether it is to be allegorically or literally taken certainly differs from that of the Buddha who pointed out that:

All that we are is the result of what we have thought; it is found on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the wagon. ...

If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him. Irving Babbitt. *The Dhammapada*. p. 3.

The key point being made here is that one's

innermost thoughts and intentions must first be illuminated by the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of Togetherness for they are the keys that "unlock" the doors to what is true and real living.

Therefore, according to Buddhism, plucking out one's "eye" or paring off one's "hand," this does not rid one of one's misperceptions and malicious intentions that trigger words that are hurtful and actions that are destructive. In fact, the "loose tongue is no different from an axe that has been triggered by a malicious mind and heart," said the Buddha. This is how words can actually kill a person with malcontent and maliciousness. Words, like deeds, are triggered by the thoughts and feelings lurking in one's deepest consciousness. Such thoughts and feelings can pierce another's heart like an arrow shot out of the blue.

Now, in the Synoptic Gospel of St. John, the historical Jesus is recorded as having declared:

"I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me." John 14:6. In bold for emphasis.

By contrast, the legendary Infant Buddha did not make such a claim that he himself was the "Only Way" to the Dharma. But instead he, with a lion's roar, declared that he would be the one to point out the Way that leads all of mankind to the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and its Actuality of Togetherness that are not the monopoly of any one person, race, culture or religion.

Therefore, just before his death, Sakyamuni, referring to the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and its Actuality of Togetherness as a Path open to all, said:

"Let the Dharma be your light. Let it be your refuge. Do not seek any other refuge. Disciples, you should well preserve and protect the doctrine which I advised you to probe and so the holy life may take its course and continue for ages to come **for the welfare of the many**, to console the world, and **for the welfare and the happiness of heavenly beings and men.**" DN 16, *Mahaparinnibbana Sutta* 6:8. In bold for emphasis.

Therefore, to be walking the Eightfold Path is a lifelong process of continuous self-examination and progressive self transformations. It is a spiritual journey of heartfelt penitence that is full of joy

SHINRAN'S WASAN

Though impossible to abandon
this world of endless woes,
And yet "being enabled" to aspire
for the Pure Land
free of woeful vanities,
Sage Sakyamuni made possible!
Therefore, for all eternity
are we all indebted to him!
KOSO WASAN No. 87
rkt- trans.

free of all fears, anxieties and guilt. It is a Path of self transformation, not an attempt to convert others.

Now, much to the surprise of male chauvinists and misogynists, Mahatma Gandhi, apparently in critical reference to religions where males have dominance over women, said:

Man can never be a woman's equal in the spirit of selfless service with which nature has endowed her. I have worshipped woman as the living embodiment of the spirit of service and sacrifice. I will far rather see the race of man extinct than that we should become less than beasts by making the noblest of God's creation, women, the object of our lust. **The best way to find your self is to lose your self in the service of others.** *Ghandi Quotes.* In bold for emphasis.

This is why, in Buddhism, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are envisioned and depicted to be more like mothers constantly hovering over their wayward children, protecting them, even at the risk of their own lives to save them, especially when they have fallen into life-threatening situations. (See Metta Sutta.)

Concerning the Genesis creation story about "the Lord God of Israel" creating Adam, the first man, and Eve, the first woman, which then tells of their sons Cain a tiller of the soil and Abel the keeper of sheep. Abel's offering of the first unblemished yearlings of his flock as burnt sacrificial offerings was accepted by God. But Cain's offerings of fruits, grains and vegetables were rejected by God. Strangely, the reason why is not given

(Genesis 4:3-5). Most likely, both also were hunters of small game, for the antediluvian Hebrews at that time were a tribal and a nomadic desert people.

Jewish historians place the date of creation anywhere from 3751 to 3761 B.C. Biblical historians generally place the Exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt between 1290 and 1224 B.C. Evolutionists, paleontologists and geologists, however, say the earth is about 4.55 billion years old. But according to Buddhist cosmology, the planets, galaxies and world systems have been coming into existence and going out of existence over timeless galactic time. Biblical history is linear because creation has a beginning and a final ending. Buddhist views being cosmological, cyclical and spherical, sees the universe as an endlessly revolving seamless circle full of beginnings and endings without a first beginning or a final ending whose beginnings and endings are unfathomable!

According to the book *Medieval Holidays and Festivals*, Easter, as already mentioned, comes from *Eostre*, the "Goddess of the Dawn and Spring." It seems that even before the dawn of ancient Jewry, and the Christians who came later, who then were followed by the Muslims, the so-called aboriginal and primitive peoples way before them already were well aware and in direct touch with the ever changing seasonal cycles, especially with furry, prolific rabbits producing bunnies and hens laying an egg day after day after day. The antediluvian Hebrews as well as the Gentiles and pagans all around them were well aware of the cycles of birth, growth, decay and death.

Francis X. Weiser, a Jesuit, in his "The Easter Book" wrote:

The origin of Easter bunny is based on the fertility lore of the Indo-European races.... Hare and rabbit were the most fertile animals our forefathers knew ... serving as symbols ... of new life in the spring season. (pp. 15, 181, 188.)

Hares as well as birds in the wild, as well as other domesticated creatures and plants "reproducing and multiplying their own kind," came to symbolize "prolific virility and fertility" and "constant renewal." Now, it is to be noted that rabbits are able to mate at the age of one month so that at the end of its second month a female can produce another pair of rabbits; and a mating pair always produces a new pair (one male, one female) every month from the second month on.

Evangelical Christians who literally interpret the Bible will be shocked to find out that the "Easter sunrise services" they observe were condemned by the Lord God of Israel to be an abomination that provoked his wrath and anger that brought him to punish those who did so (Ezekiel 8:1-18; Leviticus 10). Ancient Egyptians worshipped the sun as the god *Ra* or *Re*, the Greeks as *Apollo*, the Hawaiians as *Maui*, the Japanese as *Ama-terasu*. All were worshipped as male deities, except *Ama-terasu* who was worshipped as a sun goddess.

Is the "The Morning Star" Jesus or Lucifer? Dean VanDruff says Lucifer means "Bright Morning Star" and refers to Christ, not to Satan (see Rev. 22:16). He says Jesus is the "Bright Morning Star," and to call Satan Lucifer is a misnomer.

Ancients also saw mysterious and magical powers in eggs. Even to this day, in certain rural areas of Appalachia, midwives use eggs to predict the sex of a child by watching the rotation of an egg suspended on a string over the abdomen of a pregnant woman. The "turning" of the egg clockwise or counterclockwise eerily reminds us of the spiraling galactic systems in outer space now seen through high-powered telescopes swirling and spinning either in the clockwise or counterclockwise rotation. Eggs, therefore, were not only symbolic of fertility, but were actually used also as potent, mysterious, and magical means to guarantee a woman's ability to bear children, especially sons to continue the male family line through the first-born son.

However, it is a fact that for a human being to be conceived there has to be a male and a female person. As stated in the "*Sutra on Our Profound Indebtedness to our Fathers and Mothers*," a female's "red seed" must be in season and ready in her womb when a male's "white seed" enters to impregnate it. In the very instant of conception, that beginning life is blessed from above, below, the sides, and all around this Earth of ours with its "five powers of conscience." They are the powers to know when something is wrong and not right; the ability to be thankful and grateful; the power to think and feel the consequences of one's words and actions even before one says or does them; the ability to be compassionate and forgiving; and, finally, the ability to visualize and en-visualize things sacred and spiritual.

The faith of Catholics and Protestants, however, is based on John 3:16 as follows:

For God so loved the world that He gave

His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting Life.

Then, surprisingly, come the following words:

He who believes in Him is **not condemned**; but he who does not believe **is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Begotten Son of God.** (John 3:18 – in bold for emphasis.)

So the controversy continues between Catholics and Protestants as to whether the following words of Jesus are to be taken literally or allegorically. They are:

I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever ... (John 6:51.)
... I say unto you, **unless you eat the flesh of the Son of a Man and drink his blood,** you have no life in you. (:53 – in bold for emphasis.)
... **Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood** has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. (:54 – in bold for emphasis.)

Fundamentalist Christians, therefore, literally believe that there is going to be a Last Day when Jesus is going to separate peoples and nations as does a shepherd separate his "sheep" from the "goats" (or "wolves in sheep's clothing"). Those who are "goats" (non-believers) then, on that final day will summarily be "cursed" to then be "cast into an everlasting fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:31-46). What this means is that Satan and his legion of demons were once angels in heaven who were cast out (Rev. 12:7-9).

Joseph Campbell (1904 – 1987), a Catholic, American writer, mythologist, and lecturer, was interviewed by Pat Riley. Campbell was asked by Riley: "*I gather you're not terribly fond of the Bible.*" Campbell replied:

Not at all. It's very pretentious to claim it to be the word of God, or accept it as such and perpetuate this tribal mythology, justifying all kinds of violence to people who are not members of the tribe.
The thing I see about the Bible that's unfortunate is that it's a tribally circumscribed mythology. It deals with a certain people at a certain time.

The Christians magnified it to include them. It then turns this society against all others, whereas the condition of the world today is that this particular society that's presented in the Bible isn't even the most important. This thing is like a dead weight. It's pulling us back because it belongs to an earlier period. We can't break loose and move into a modern theology.

One of the great promises of mythology is, with what social group do you identify? How about the planet?

I think that what might be called the sanctified chauvinism of the Bible is one of the curses of the planet today. *Mythic Reflections: Thoughts on myth, spirit, and our times. An interview with Joseph Campbell,* by Tom Collins. Context Institute.

Shinran in his day already pointed out the identity between all things whether animate or inanimate and the Dharma World! (see his Notes on the Essentials of Faith p.42).

Incidentally, Campbell in his *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space* makes an observation that surprisingly confirms Shinran Shonin's insight into the perennial nature of human beings, as follows:

... the human imagination moved by the conflicting urgencies of the organs (including

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continued from p. 2

Donations

the brain) of the human body, of which the anatomy has remained pretty much the same since 40,000 B.C. ... (p. xiv)

Campbell has neatly encapsulated and summarized the term *bombu*, a mortal human being riddled by *bonno* (blinding passions and self vanities), who also is thoughtlessly and unwittingly committing transgressions and grave desecrations.

In closing, I again quote Albert Einstein, who said:

I cannot imagine a God who rewards and punishes the objects of his creation, whose purposes are modeled after our own — a God, in short, who is but a reflection of human frailty. Neither can I believe that the individual survives the death of his body, although feeble souls harbor such thoughts through fear or ridiculous egotisms. Albert Einstein, Obituary in New York Times, 19 April 1955.

Let us then continue contemplating the ultimate significations of Amida's forty-eight vows based on her declaration: "If I fail to bring each and every sentient being to their attaining of their Buddhahood the equal of mine, I then will not accept my enlightenment to be final until they are all so enlightened!" Namoh-amida-butsu!

BUDDHIST PASSAGE & STORY

As a tree cut down sprouts forth again if its roots remain uninjured and strong, even so when the propensity to craving is not destroyed, this suffering arises again and again. *Dhammapada* v. 338 (Walpola Rahula. *What The Buddha Taught*. p. 135).

QUESTION-ANSWER KORNER

QUESTION: How long did Siddhartha the Prince meditate under the Bodhi Tree?

ANSWER: Prince Siddhartha is said to have subjected himself to several years of extreme ascetic self renunciation beginning at age 29. Then, upon realizing the futility of self mortification, he abandoned its practice. Then, upon recovering from near death, he vowed to sit in immovable meditation under the Bodhi Tree (Pipal tree) until such time he "awoke" and "realized" the truth concerning all of existence.

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HI TECH WORKSHOP

Where: Shinshu Kyokai Mission Social Hall
When: Sunday, April 7, 2013 at 10:30 AM

iPhone Q&A



Topics:

- Common computer and gadget terms
- Sources of additional information
- Apple iPhone basics and built-in apps
- Popular ^{free} iPhone 3rd party apps

Buddhist scriptures do not say how long he sat in meditation under the Bodhi Tree. But, since he set out on a forty-year ministry at age 35, this would mean the length of time was some five to six years, because he became enlightened at age 35.