

## The light within

Just recently I had the opportunity to attend two events from a Korean Pastor, 78 year old Dr. David Yonggi Cho, the founder of the largest Pentecostal Church on earth. When I was referred to this large event, I did not think it would be a Christian gathering, and to my surprise it was well organized and attracted at least 2,500 people to each of the two events. Being a Catholic, many eyebrows would have been raised in the past: how can I support a different religion from mine? It sounds almost as a betrayal.

The Pentecostals are a healing Christian denomination. They perform miracles on stage, many real and not just the result of people feeling extremely good after participating in one of these very intense events, where live Christian music is played, and excellent singers and dancers perform for the audience.

Each of these Pentecostal events is always extremely intense, with people participating on the dancing, clapping, and singing after being overtaken by the Holy Spirit, the miracle maker. When I was registering at the entrance I was asked what my religion was, I replied a Catholic. There was almost a sense of disappointment in their eyes, to which I replied that I was a Christian too and Christ was the center of our Religion. I went in and became absorbed by the crowd, a living organism that seemed to live for those two hours as a united body, being driven by Dr Yonggi Cho.

Regardless of the very positive event that attracted and guides thousands through the wisdom of the words expressed, money was requested and everybody helped. I do not mind supporting these ministries because in the end the purpose is always mankind's evolvment, regardless of the fact that this is well established religion with its imperfections and flaws.

Doctor Cho was convicted after embezzling 12 million US Dollars on an investment where he asked his people to buy his own son's stocks at four times their price, as well as unpaid taxes to South Korea, of which he had to pay around 4 million. In the end he was convicted to spend three years in a Korean jail. He came out repented, ashamed and apologizing for the bad example and great disappointment he had become. Years later he is back strong again, even at 78.

All manmade structures, organizations, churches and societies are imperfect, simply because they are designed by imperfect beings. It is almost unavoidable to observe constant flaws in anything and everything that is man-made, but in this particular case I have learned that as human beings we will continue to disappoint and be disappointed. The only possible option is the try to do our humanly best at all times.

Sports clubs, Unions, sport teams, choirs, religions, fan clubs etc., will always be imperfect. A Priest or a Pastor that believe perfection oozes out of their pores can be a source of confusion. To me, this never ending parade of shame serves to remember that it does not really matter. It is not the ideal outcome, but it is normal. What is important is to realize that the final purpose not only of religions, but of life itself, is to become more conscious of God's presence exists throughout the Cosmos, even on each of us, tricky and gullible as we are.

I believe that our purpose is to not only become aware of this divine fountain of love, joy and ever changing beauty through perfection, but to attempt to change as well as everything does. In order to make this possible, forgiveness and laughter are always needed: forgiveness to heal the wounds inflicted by others, because we understand we have caused pain as well, and laughter to release it all as a walk through the forest, where regardless of how many times we may stumble, and the highest pick is all that matters.

I prefer to embrace the beauty that is granted to us through nature through the gift of our own lives and the countless blessings we receive every minute of every hour of our lives. All religions are similar to man-made, temporary wooden doors, carved with the beauty and particularities derived from different cultures, traditions and concepts. Religions reflect the past and the present of their communities, and serve as a grounding source of inspiration at the very least.

Each of these doors will lead to God. When we choose any door that suits us the best, we go through it and walk towards the highest peak where God resides far and beyond all darkness. All religions lead to God.

Sometimes I believe we invest too much time on making comparisons between religions as we continue to drag our carcass through life with the imperfections and burdens of being human. We try to fly towards God, we know we want to do it, and yet we refuse to let go of the many straps that tie us to these unimportant traits.

As usual, the easiest is just to let go, to transform into forgiveness, generosity, compassion, kindness, and true love. Religions have guided humanity for thousands of years; but perhaps it is time for all of us to allow God's divine essence within us to shine through our lives, in all possible ways.