



LENT: Jesus and James Bond

James Bond would never be caught dying on the Cross. At the last minute, James Bond somehow manages to escape and always wins in the end. Hurrah for James Bond! But **Jesus lost**, dying by torture on the Cross. Easter is joyous celebration. Lent is our time to cry.

Growing up in Hilo, Hawaii, we spoke Hawaiian **pidgin English**. We had a special phrase for absolute hopeless failure—"ma-ke, die, dead." **Ma-ke** is Hawaiian for "dead." "Ma-ke, die, dead" means **DEAD, DEAD, DEAD!**

Jesus on the Cross is "ma-ke, die, dead!" Jesus was no James Bond. He was "**dead, dead, dead.**" The Cross is losing. The Resurrection is winning. The message is "winning by losing."

Paul Nagano was tall for a Japanese—a good basketball player. His team usually won. Whenever he returned from a game and told his mother they lost, she would say, "**makeru ga kachi**," (win by losing).

The Commander in Chief of U.S. forces always gets it wrong. He prays that we will kill the enemy and win the war. He gets angry that when the chaplain prays for our troops, he also prays for the enemy troops. The chaplain knows that we really win the war only when we see the enemy as our brothers. Winning by losing.

Mother Teresa gave her life to heal suffering people in Calcutta. A Muslim in Calcutta (Kolkata) said to me: "Mother Teresa is not only your Mother. She is also our Mother." Christian missionaries are loved throughout the world for helping the poor, the sick, and the dying. Christian missionaries are hated throughout the world for converting people away from their family religion. But Mother Teresa helps the poor, the sick, and the dying without trying to steal them from their family religion.

Mother Teresa made no direct effort to make converts—only to relieve suffering. I was in Calcutta during nation-wide riots. Over 2,000 Hindu-Muslim killings. No one was allowed to drive on the streets of Calcutta during martial law—except for only one person, Mother Teresa. Only Mother Teresa's ambulances were allowed to drive freely around the city streets, picking up sick and dying people. Because she did not try to convert anybody, she converted the entire city. The Hindus and Muslims all say that Mother Teresa is their mother, too. That's "Winning by Losing."

I lived in Calcutta for over 2 months, volunteering also in Mother Teresa's Home for the Dying. Hard work. Blood, sweat and tears. Ellen worked for a whole week in the Home for the Dying. When we returned to Japan, Ellen was suspected of catching tuberculosis in the Home for the Dying. They took cultures in the TB Hospital for one month before they cleared her.

For a whole month I thought I had lost Ellen! We volunteered at the Home for the Dying at the risk of our lives—no gloves, no masks. Mother Teresa said, "Love cannot be felt through gloves and masks. When you return to your home country, be sure to get tested for tuberculosis."

A lady from Japan volunteered for two months at the Home for the Dying. When she returned to Japan, she wrote a letter to Ellen. She was fired from her job. She had caught tuberculosis at the Home for the Dying. You volunteer at the risk of your life.

Jesus Christ was no James Bond. He was "**ma-ke, die, dead!**" No Easter without Lent! Not winning by winning, but winning by losing! Redemptive suffering. What do you think?

Rev. Dickson Kazuo Yagi

BEING HAPPY OR BEING SAD

I was walking across campus when Sharon, our retirement community nurse, stopped me. She scolded me saying, “Do you realize how depressing your face looks? One look is enough to ruin the day for anybody.” My wife had just died. I would be in grief for the next three years. Sharon knew that, but I could not be allowed to ruin the day for our residents for the next three years. (I have the opposite of a poker face).

America is a smiling society. Smile, even if your wife just died!

Turn back the calendar some sixty years to 1961. After a year in language school in Shibuya, I was enrolled in Tokyo Union Seminary. The Christian Education professor had a smiling face every day. But I was delighted that the World Religions professor had a scowl. In Japan it was OK to frown if you felt like frowning. Fifteen years after losing a war, some citizens were still not smiling.

Today in California, my retirement years writing Buddhist-Christian essays are the happiest years of my life. On the other hand, cracks have appeared in this happy, happy scene. It is also the most worrisome years, with times of panic in the dark of the night. These are the happiest and most worrisome years of my life.

Three of my friends made lifetime decisions for happiness—that Christian joy was not left to chance in the stock market, political elections, or the Lakers winning the basketball championship. They have decided to be happy no matter what! Strangely not only Christian leaders, but also some Buddhist leaders have championed **happiness** as the genuine message for the world.

Thich Nhat Hanh has said that nobody would believe Buddhism if Buddhists don’t smile. But Nhat Hanh wisely expressed a balanced/contradictory view of life experiences: “We have within us the seeds of despair, of anger, but we also have the seeds of compassion, awakening, Buddha-nature, and mindfulness.” [“Waking Up The Nation”, Tricycle, Winter 2001] The word “**seeds**” is the key. We have a choice of seeds we water and nourish.

I have struggled with happiness and worry for the last 14 years. One discovery was that my three friends with lifetime decisions to be happy no matter what—their decisions came not from the Bible, but from **Zorba the Greek**.

But the opposite claim is also true—that **suffering, not joy**, is at the center of Christianity and Buddhism. The image of Christ being tortured to death on the Cross is the central symbol of Christianity—**not joy, but suffering!** The Triannual International Conference of Buddhism and Christianity was held at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles about 15 years ago (Society of Buddhist-Christian Studies). I was on the planning committee. The main theme was Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion Who Hears the **Groanings** of All Creatures (**Kuan Yin** in Chinese, **Kannon**=Kanzeon bosatsu in Japanese. The Canon Camera Company is named for Kannon by devout Japanese Buddhist owners). **Suffering, not joy!** Well, which is it—suffering or happiness?

Maybe the answer is simple. Smile when you’re happy, and cry when it hurts. Of course, quitting ego-centered living is an answer with spiritual depth. But somehow, Buddhists and Christians feel that religion should have some magic to turn sorrow into joy. I don’t know about that. It is 10 years since my wife died. For me, it is enough for **joy to outlive sorrow!** How are you solving this problem?

D.K. Yagi

Dickson K. Yagi 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 in post-grad. studies from David Kalupahana (Theravada), David Chappell, and Alfred Bloom (both Mahayana). He taught Christian Studies 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.

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



BODY AND SOUL

One of the biggest problems I have always had with life after death is that I couldn't conceive of a disembodied person. Yet it is obvious to me that the body deteriorates and dies. That doesn't mean that the person does. If I say that a person has a soul and the soul continues after death, then perhaps the soul has the opportunity to live a life appropriate to itself. So I now think that after we die, our souls are capable of living their lives without the body. To me, the "soul" is the deep center of our lives. Yet, I also think of it as "entity".

So here are some of my conclusions:

One, after death, the soul lives its life and one of the aspects of its life is that it feels itself united in a very significant way with all other souls. It is also possible that the individual soul, sometime after death, merges with or melts into all of the other souls. Thus becoming a "world soul".

Two, perhaps we ought to seriously consider spending considerably more time on the cultivation of our soul during our lifetimes. This could mean spending more time meditating on what is essential and most important. Also, it could mean talking with other people in a much more honest way, soul to soul, talking about the negative as well as the positive. I think that we are too careful about what we talk about with other people. We underestimate their ability to go deep with us.

I have shared some of these ideas already in my blogs. but perhaps this puts a little different perspective on things.

Bill Malcomson

Dr. William Malcomson is retired in Washington State. He was Dean of the American Baptist Seminary of the West, a founder of the School of Theology and Ministry of Seattle University, former President of the Council for Pacific Asian Theology, and former Theologian-in-Residence at Seattle First Baptist Church. He is blessed with two sons, one of whom is a Christian Buddhist, one daughter, and 5 grandchildren. Bill has a Ph.D. from Princeton in World Religions. **He recently suffered a stroke, 2/05/20.** We rejoice in his survival. We pray for his full recovery and his further ministry among us. The source of his wisdom is not religious logic, but experience—the joys and tears of the briar patch of life. Many of us are his secret disciples. *DRYagi*

Shock and Sadness

MAR 19, 2021 – Tricycle: The Buddhist Review - <https://tricycle.org/trikedaily/anti-asian-violence/>

Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple in downtown Los Angeles |



On the night of February 25, a man climbed over the fence protecting the [Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple](#) in downtown Los Angeles. According to the temple's security camera, he started a fire that torched two wooden lantern stands, tipped over and smashed two metal lanterns, and, before leaving, threw a rock through a panel of glass near the front door.

Bishop Noriaki Ito has been with the temple, part of the [Jodo Shinshu](#) or True Pure Land tradition, since 1976. Bishop Ito is the rinban (head minister) of the temple's [Los Angeles location](#) and director of the Higashi Honganji North America

District. He spoke to Tricycle Contributing Editor Daniel Burke on March 17, the day after eight people, including six Asian American women, were murdered in Atlanta.



I feel extreme sorrow for the continuation of these kinds of acts. Shock and sadness. What can we do? That question has been asked a lot at our temple. Maybe the man who attacked our temple felt that other religions besides his own are not valid. Or maybe it was just an attack on an Asian American institution because of what is happening in our country. It certainly seems like much of the hostility came after the coronavirus and the election of President Donald Trump. At least, those are the main reasons.

We moved to our location in Little Tokyo in 1976, one year after I joined the staff. There was a stretch of time when the economy was bad and downtown was empty and perceived to be dangerous, with car break-ins and such. We had some things stolen. But I haven't had any kind of negative experience like this in the past fifteen years or so. The temple is mainly Japanese American, but we have diversified and have active members from a variety of backgrounds.

The suspect hasn't been caught, so we don't know his motives yet, but it seems to be part of this whole terrible situation of anti-Asian crimes. Now, with everything that happened at the temple and Atlanta, I feel like I have to look behind me to make sure no one is threatening. I listen to the stories about all the elders and women and children who have been attacked, and we have to label it what it is: hate. But at the same time, my position as a Buddhist priest means I need to always remember to express compassion for others, even the person who violated our temple.

Bishop Noriaki Ito



[Daniel Burke](#) is a contributing editor to *Tricycle*. [Bishop Noriaki Ito](#) is the head priest at the Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple in Los Angeles and director of the Shin Buddhist organization's North American District. Essay condensed. (Reprint permission by Bishop Ito)

So, What about Death Control?



My Life My Death My Choice
FinalExitNetwork.org

Dr. Leroy Seat

Death Control is Not Euthanasia

First, it is important to note that “death control” is not euthanasia, which is illegal in every state in the U.S.

One page on The CompassionAndChoices.org website ([see here](#)) states this clearly: “Medical aid in dying is fundamentally different from euthanasia.”

Here’s why:

Euthanasia is an intentional act by which another person (not the dying person) administers the medication. In contrast, medical aid in dying requires the patient to be able to take the medication themselves and therefore always remain in control.

Thus, if used soon enough, MAID (medical aid [or assistance] in dying) can be used by people suffering from cancer, ALS, MS, or other progressively debilitating diseases—but not with those suffering from acute dementia. (This latter is a very sticky issue that I will think/write more about later.)

Death Control is Not Suicide

The term “physician-assisted suicide” (PAS) has long been used, and terminally ill people who have taken means to end their lives have often been said to have committed suicide. But increasingly, that is being seen to be a negative/judgmental term that should be avoided.

Citing the same CompassionAndChoices webpage, many leading medical organizations “have all adopted policies opposing the use of the terms ‘suicide’ and ‘assisted suicide’ to describe the medical practice of aid in dying.”

Here are some differences between MAID and suicide (h/t to suicideinfo.ca):

** Suicide is often carried out alone and in secrecy, leaving loved ones with devastating grief; MAID involves decision-making informed by medical personnel and usually includes loved ones.

** Suicide is usually due to mental pain: distress, loss of meaning and purpose in life, and psychological burdens considered too heavy to bear any longer; MAID is chosen by those whose death is apparently inevitable in a matter of several weeks or a few months because of serious physical illness.

** Suicide is often carried out in violent ways (such as by self-inflicted gunshot); MAID uses non-violent means provided by trained professionals.

So, What is Death Control?

Death control means terminally ill people having the right to choose ending their life at the time and place of their choice—and with grace and dignity. Making such choices legal and practicable is the purpose of these organizations:

[Compassion & Choices](#)
[Death with Dignity National Center](#)
[Final Exit Network](#)

Among other things, these organizations are seeking to increase the number of states where MAID is legal, and that is a good and important work. Several states are considering such legislation at the present time; sadly, Missouri is not. ([See this map](#) for the situation in all states.)

Last week there was [an intriguing obituary](#) in a New York newspaper: “Martha Schroeder died with dignity at home on the afternoon of February 25, 2021. She was 90 years old. Her fear of losing control to dementia and blindness was peacefully put to rest.”

Although there is currently a MAID bill before the New York legislature, assisted death is not yet legal in that state. But if, and when, such legislation is enacted

in N.Y. and states across the country, perhaps an increasing number of obituaries will report people dying with dignity—and by MAID.

Such death control seems to be a desirable, humane, and compassionate way to deal with the lingering suffering of terminally ill patients and the futile expenses of keeping people alive in spite of an extremely low quality of life.

For all of us, death is inevitable. But since for many terminally ill people death with dignity is something that can be controlled, why don't we actively seek to make that a possibility for those who desire to make that choice?

This essay was first published on March 5, 2021 in Dr. Seat's blog,
The View From This Seat.blogspot.com

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*

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I SHALL NOT WANT (23rd Psalm)

Naomi Ogawa was a “picture bride.” She got on a ship from Japan to California to marry a man she had never met. Clutching his photograph, she crossed the Pacific. She married the man, bearing him eight children in the poor farmland outside Sanger, some 35 miles east of Fresno. The daughter of a Methodist minister in Japan, she had enough theology coming out of her ears. But struggling to raise eight children in poverty, her religion was reduced to only one anchor of faith—“**God will not let us starve!**” Naomi Ogawa was my mother-in-law.

With Bible teaching coming out our ears, do we have one anchor that we can bet our life on? *DKYagi*

MEMORIAL PRAYERS FOR A CAT

D.K.Yagi

It was summer vacation so Nathan was home from Canadian Academy in Kobe. He and I studied on different desks in my faculty office at the university. At noon we walked to the cafeteria. Crossing a small street, we came upon a horrible sight of a cat run over and smashed into the asphalt by multiple cars. After lunch we crossed the street again. Nathan grabbed my arm and pointed again and again to the large lump in the asphalt.

I said, “Yeah, yeah, I know.” I went to a bathroom and took the long handled thongs for picking up trash. We both went to the lump in the road. With some strenuous pulling I succeeded in pulling the dead cat out of the asphalt. I put him in a large plastic trash bag I had brought along. I dumped him into my car trunk.

After several hours studying in my office, I drove us both home in the late afternoon. Getting out of the car, Nathan noticed I had forgotten about the cat. He said, “Dad, Dad,” pointing to the trunk of the car. I said, “Yeah, yeah, I know.” I got out the trash bag from the trunk and put it in the trash barrel. Nathan grabbed my arm and said, “Dad, Dad.” I answered, “I know, I know.” I picked up the trash bag and emptied the smelling cat in the dirt of our small garden.

I got the hole digging tool to plant posts. I dug a deep hole, tossed in the cat, and buried it. I turned to go into the house. But Nathan grabbed my arm again, and said, “Dad, Dad.” I said, “I know, I know.” I emptied my mind of everything I had planned to do. And I concentrated all my heart upon the cat for the first time.

Nathan and I stood at the cat grave in silence. Then I prayed with all my heart, mind, and soul. It is the practice of Japanese business companies to order employees to move away every 5 years to branch offices in distant provinces. Valuable experiences are gained in the changing business and social practices of different locales. In moving house, though, hundreds of cats get abandoned.

Domesticated dogs and cats return to their original wild state as they desperately forage trash cans for survival. Then cats get hit by cars. Smaller cats get eaten by gangs of wild dogs. I prayed for every cat abandoned, starving, hit by cars, or eaten by dogs. I prayed my heart out, and Nathan was finally satisfied. Finally prayed out, we both walked slowly into the house. That’s what it is like to have a son who is Buddhist.

In Asia they believe that we all live thousands of lifetimes. All living beings—cats, eagles, whales, ants, and mosquitos—have been our mother or father in some lifetime. We should treat each one with gratitude and dignity. We Christians should learn that from Buddhists.

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 the Keystone XL Pipeline.

Protect the Arctic Sanctuary from oil and gas drilling.

Protect National Parks and Monuments (Trump Administration opened Bear Ears and Grand Staircase-Excalante to oil drilling, fracking, and mining, 2/10/20).

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 (US women's soccer?)

Citizenship for DACA. (Biden stopped DACA deportation).

America's Original Sins:

Stealing land from Native Americans by betraying treaties and genocide.

National economy built on 400 years of Black slave labor.

National railway built on blood, sweat, and tears of Chinese.

No Separation of Children from Refugee Parents on Southern Border. Numerous large detention centers are being built to warehouse these children. These replicate WW2 concentration camps for Japanese Americans.

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.

Disarmament of Nuclear Weapons (No More Hiroshima-Nagasaki)

Religions networking for social justice in major cities (Jews, Muslims, Christians. Buddhists, and Hindus Together).

Power to the People, Democracy for Myanmar.

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)

No US Visa Bans against Muslim majority nations.

(Sudan, Tanzania, Eritrea, Myanmar, Kyrgyzstan, and Nigeria were added to the visa ban, in addition to the 7 previous Muslim nations. 2/05/20).

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