



COUNCIL FOR PACIFIC ASIAN THEOLOGY (CPAT)

PACIFIC ASIAN VISION

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DYING #1: COCOONS

The dying man at Kuakini Hospital on Oahu begged the chaplain to find his son. He had fought with his son several decades ago. They had not reconciled.

We all wear armor to protect our ego in daily collisions at home, on the job, or at the golf course. Sometimes dying people are transformed in the melting away of ego-protection.

In leaving this earthly battlefield, there is no longer any need for ego protection. Sometimes anger, jealousy, bitterness, and vanity melt away in the dying process. Our best word at a funeral is not "**May he rest in peace,**" (stay dead forever) but **resurrection!** Buddhists say "**jōbutsu**" (becoming a Buddha). A second chance with new possibilities. Neither the Christian Heaven nor the Buddhist Pure Land permits "**resting in the perpetual peace of death.**"

A caterpillar breaks out of a cocoon as a multi-colored butterfly. Death is our cocoon to a new life in a new world with new assignments and new possibilities--a second chance! In the powerful transition of dying, Hitler can receive a second chance--transformed into a wonderful, compassionate, caring person. Why not?

Death as a cocoon! A caterpillar reborn as a butterfly! If not, what is heaven for? What is the point in repeating earthly failures and misery over and over again in hundreds of lifetimes?

Resurrection is a thrilling spiral upwards if we are destined for growth in beauty and kindness, and joy. The more lifetimes and resurrections the better if we are spiraling upwards to our maturity in Christ. I need to endure many cocoons and rebirths to become like Jesus. Are you that far ahead of me?

May you not rest in the perpetual peace of death. As snakes shed their skins to grow, may we all outgrow our earthly skins and mature into our destiny in Christ! What is heaven for, if not maturing in our destiny to become like Jesus. The Buddhists say "**jōbutsu,**" to become a Buddha. Neither religion allows "resting in peace"--be dead forever. What do you think?

Rev. Dickson Kazuo Yagi 屋宜和夫

DYING #2: HEAVEN

What if:

All Blacks became White, all Whites became Black?
All billionaires became ditch diggers, and all ditch diggers became billionaires?
All men became women, and all women became men?

All slaves became slave owners, and all slave owners become slaves?
All starving refugees became happy citizens,
and all happy citizens became starving refugees?

All politicians, bankers, scientists, and military brass who invented the A-bomb
were vaporized in the first mushroom cloud?

It is Congress who decides a war, and youth who die.
All Congressmen became footsoldiers, and all footsoldiers became Congressmen?

In some ways, heaven should **reverse** life on earth?

I would be thrilled if I could live in heaven with my family once again.
I want to be with my wife, my parents, my daughter, my son,
my grandson, my brother, my sisters, my grandparents,
my uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces, and nephews.

Can I also have our childhood dogs, Spotty and Flicks?
Huge barrel of 6 playful goldfish,
aquarium of tropical fish,
Four pots of huge green leaf plants,
And
Pavarotti, My Green Finch Songbird?
He sang one hour every morning just for me.

What would be heaven for you?
Happy Hunting Ground? Last Round-Up?

Hope is the last piece of the Jesus vision.
Hope is more than something we know.
It is something we **dream**.

Dreaming is the joy-inspiring engine of the Jesus vision.

Of course,

Heaven is a thousand times better than our minds can imagine
or our words express,
But I need dreams. You have no dreams?

(I am missing my song bird who died this week.)

Rev. Dickson Kazuo Yagi

HIROSHIMA, NAGASAKI MEMORIAL

“Twinkle, twinkle, little star, how I wonder what you are.”

In Japanese, “twinkle, twinkle” is “**PIKA, PIKA.**”

The roar of thunder in Japanese is “**DON!**”

The bomb burst. The first thing they saw was the blinding flash of light. That they called, “twinkle, twinkle.” “PIKA, PIKA.” The heat melted bodies and bones. The light was so severe that it burned the silhouette of human beings on to the sidewalk. The heat melted 5 fingers into one claw of scar tissue--**KELOID.**

Then came the deafening thunder, “**DON.**” PIKA, then DON. So they called the Atomic bomb, PIKA-DON. The nickname for Atomic bomb in Hiroshima became **PIKA-DON.**

The U. S. exploded their first Atomic-bomb in 1945. The Soviets followed in 1949. Then came China, Israel, India, Pakistan, and North Korea. The first American Hydrogen bomb was 500 times the power of the Hiroshima bomb. The Soviets and China also developed their own Hydrogen bombs. By 2006 the Soviets and the U.S. together had stockpiled more than 10,000 Atomic and Hydrogen bombs.

As President Kennedy said, “Mankind must put an end to war, or war will put an end to mankind.” As American citizens we cry for Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We cry also for the human race. We cry for all animal and vegetable life. We cry for our Great Planet Earth. May human beings never experience PIKA-DON again.

We pray for the victims of the triple disaster of **Fukushima**—earthquake, tidal wave, and the cracking of the nuclear reactor leaking thousands of tons of dangerous radioactive water. For our children and children’s children, may God, all Buddhas, and all Kamisama have mercy on us. Amen.

Annual Hiroshima-Nagasaki Memorial
Pacific Asian Nuclear-Free Peace Alliance
Closing Christian Prayer
Rev. Dickson Kazuo Yagi, Retired
Sage Granada Park United Methodist Church
Alhambra, So. CA.
August 2, 2021, 6:30-8 pm by ZOOM



Bill Malcomson

A FAREWELL VISION: LIFE AFTER DEATH

Rev. Dr. William Malcomson

Introduction: Rev. Curt McCormack

With Christi's blessing, I thought it would be important, at least to me, to bring closure to Bill's Blog.

He was an avid writer of his thoughts and he enjoyed writing his blogs as much as we enjoyed reading them. I went back and pulled blog #9 of **May 2016**, for what might be a good sense of closure for our friend and brother Bill. His topic was **Life after Death**. (edited)

"The plain fact is that we humans agonize a great deal about our mortality. And with good reason. Premature deaths--the deaths of children, of young people, of anyone who dies before living a long life seems incredibly unfair and often tragic. It is agonizing to see persons slowly waste away with dementia or Parkinson's or ALS or any of a number of diseases which entail a "long goodbye."

It is often experienced as tragic when life ends too soon or when death does not come soon enough. I have had friends who have taken charge of their own mortality through suicide, or refusing to eat, or deciding to die "with dignity." For the most part, we do not take kindly to death. Throughout history death has often been called "the enemy." We want it to be done away with or overcome or for it to be a mere "transition," or for mortality to be "swallowed up" in immortality.

Religious traditions have offered a myriad of ways to avoid death or overcome its effects or open up new possibilities for life of some kind after death. Belief systems, commitments to certain ways of living are put forth as ways to move beyond mortality. If you truly believe in Jesus Christ as Son of God and follow him in ways that are laid out for you, you will live eternally. Or if you move along the path to enlightenment, in this life or in a number of lives to come, you will enter Nirvana and mortality is overcome.

Let me be very honest. I do not think that we can overcome mortality. If there is a life after death, I do not believe that it is a repeat or a re-doing of this life. This life is an embodied one. And bodies die. As far as we know, minds die as minds are embodied. What we think of as "me" dies when death comes. At least it seems so to me.

This is extremely hard to take if someone whom we love has died. It is very difficult to deal with what one of our readers recently called his "hole in my heart" when his wife died. My faith tells me that when Jesus died on a cross, he really died. Not only that, but when he died a real death, he identified with all of humankind. He knew what we know, and he died as we die.

Finally, I think there are certain life after death options that are worth looking at. We live after death in other people: In our descendants, in those whom we have influenced, in our contributions to institutions, causes, communities, those whom we have loved and who continue to remember us.

*Is it possible that we could come back to this earth in another form? In other words, **re-incarnation**. My problem with this idea, shared by many and an important tenet of much of Eastern religion, is that the new form would not really be "me." It would be another life-form. Some holy persons have said that they remember their past lives and see a connection with previous lives. The assumption in this view is that there is hope in each incarnation that one will have the opportunity for an even better life. This is hard for me to affirm.*

Here is where I am on this issue: I do believe that in this embodied life we can connect with what is more than the five senses. I believe that I and many others throughout history have felt that there is an "energy," a Spirit, a force that we cannot explain but which we have experienced that is operative in all of life--not only human life.

*We are not all that there is. We do not know everything. Many of us have felt that we are connected, in touch with, have been opened up to an energizing spirit that is particularly real in the experience of creativity, in our deep identification with animated life (in humans, animals, all life forms), in our moments when we feel at one with all that is and even what could be. We believe that somehow, in some mysterious and indescribable way, **we are not alone**.*

*I have trouble calling this energy **God**, because that term carries too much baggage. I usually call it **Spirit**, but that does not always help. There is no name that names the fullness of this experience. Somehow, and this is where it gets tricky, this energizing spirit within and among us, seems **not to be mortal** as we are mortal.*

*The Apostle Paul was trying to get at this, I think, in talking about a "**spiritual body**." His view of the resurrection of Jesus was not that Jesus died and walked around after his death in some bodily form, but that **Jesus somehow lived in Paul**. I think that what I call the energizing Spirit is like what Paul was experiencing. He used the terminology of his time. He used terms that **made sense two thousand years ago**. But we do not live in his time.*

*But is it possible that when we die, some kind of connection with this Spirit can and will go on? Maybe there are no **separate identities** after death, maybe there is nothing we could call a body, even a spiritual body, but maybe there is a possibility of **something new**, of something we cannot begin to comprehend. Maybe there is a **communal life**, maybe there is a "**coming home**" into nothing that you or I could conceive of as home now."*

Bill Malcomson

So, there you have it, if only Bill could now confirm or deny to us his writing on this blog. Whatever it might be, Bill is comfortably home among family and friends that have transitioned before him. Most likely, still the minister, and still the teacher.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning said in one of her poems, “**Life is perfected by death.**” I’m not sure what perfection is on the other side, but I would think it to be, “**Well done, good and faithful Servant.**”

Blessings to All of Bill’s extended family,
Rev. Curt McCormack

Dr. William Malcomson was 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 University in World Religions. **He recently suffered a stroke**, 2/05/20. For over a year Bill dictated his monthly musings to us from his **hospital bed**, and then from **hospice**. The source of his wisdom is not religious logic, but **soul experience**—the joys and tears of the briar patch of life. Many of us are his secret disciples, *Dickson K. Yagi.*

"BON VOYAGE, BIG BROTHER, VAYA CON DIOS."

A BLESSING

May Jesus Christ think through my mind,
May Jesus Christ see through my eyes,
May Jesus Christ hear through my ears,
May Jesus Christ speak through my mouth,
May Jesus Christ live in this world once again,
Through my hands and feet.
Amen

Anyone wishing to donate may use this address:

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