

**THE TWENTY-SECOND JAMES BACKHOUSE LECTURE
1986**

**LOOKING FOR MEANINGS OF MY
A -BOMB EXPERIENCE IN NAGASAKI**

Susumu Ishitani

The James Backhouse Lectures

This is one of a series of lectures instituted by Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends on the occasion of the establishment of that Yearly Meeting in January 1964.

This lecture was delivered in Brisbane on 7 January 1986 during the Yearly Meeting.

James Backhouse was an English Friend who visited Australia from 1832 to 1838. He and his companion, George Washington Walker, travelled widely but spent most of their time in Tasmania. It was through this visit that Quaker Meetings were first established in Australia. James Backhouse was a botanist who published full accounts of what he saw, besides encouraging Friends and following up his deep concern for the convicts and Aborigines.

Australian Friends hope that this series of lectures will bring fresh insights into truth, often with reference to the needs and aspirations of Australian Quakerism.

William Oats
Presiding Clerk
Australian Yearly Meeting

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National Library of Australia
Card Number and ISBN 0 909885 24 9

Typeset by Household Word

About the Author

Susumu Ishitani. Member of Tokyo Meeting. Visiting Fellow at Woodbrooke, 1982-83. His grandfather worked with an American Friend, Willis Whitney, at Akasaka Hospital in the 1870s. He was 13 when the A-bomb was dropped on Nagasaki in August 1945.

As a peace activist he attended the International Peace Researchers and Peace Activists conference in the Netherlands in July 1975 and the International Seminar on Training in Nonviolent Action in Mexico in July 1978. In Japan he has been active with the Peace Tax Campaign and works with local peace groups opposed to the us naval home-port at Yokosuka in his home town of Yokohama.

Susumu is currently Professor of Ethics at Hosei University in Tokyo and chairman of the National Council of Churches - Japan Peace Committee. In 1984 he went with a delegation from the committee to the Philippines and Belau.

He is married with three children.

About this lecture

Susumu was a boy of 13 when the A-bomb was dropped on his home city, Nagasaki. In this lecture he gives graphic details of the experience of living through the aftermath of the disaster. Apart from the horror of human suffering from the blast itself, the author reflects on the impact on Japanese people of the increasing awareness of the aggressive military role played by their country in the years before 1945. He also identifies positive elements of the experience, such as the good friendships formed between occupying US soldiers and Japanese citizens.

The author himself became a Quaker as a direct result of meeting a visiting American conscientious objector. Susumu Ishitani became committed to peace work as an extension of a deep concern for the universality of God's children. He travelled to other parts of the world to strengthen links among people of different backgrounds.

In the lecture Susumu Ishitani affirms the unity of human experience and the potential for concerted action for peace. He evokes parallels between the crisis of 1945 and the crisis of today for the world. He relates his personal trauma to the wider fate of humanity.

Foreword

There is a fundamental difference between the Japanese way of thinking and that of the West. This lecture, which may appear to some as a personal document, is in fact a perfect presentation in the Japanese manner of a philosophical and religious exercise resulting from the devastating experience of the bomb dropped on Nagasaki.

Logic for Western people is equated with our method of thinking: the inductive or deductive method by which an idea or intellectual intuition is subjected to scrutiny with a view to proving a thesis or arriving at a conclusion. A simplified way of describing it may be linear or directional thinking.

Japanese thought does not proceed in this way. It consists of a number of ideas or insights thrown out in a seemingly random way, which gradually illuminate and converge upon a central theme, at first unperceived by the reader or listener which as it becomes clearer appears as the conclusion or target. The ideas leading to this conclusion are not purely intellectual but result as well from the emotions, the senses and to some extent from the will. In perfectly integrated thinking these functions will be in perfect balance.

It is important in this lecture for Susumu Ishitani to return constantly and not necessarily in chronological order to actual experiences. When he writes of the moment when the bomb was dropped, the time spent in the shelter with Japanese soldiers, the American troops arriving and so on, he recounts in detail his physical reactions and his feelings, because these are an integral part of his dawning awareness of the meaning to him of these events. While for us the meaning might be the 'moral' to be drawn from the events - the gold separated from the dross - for a Japanese the gold and the dross are inseparable, part of a total experience.

This lecture stands as a meditational exercise and what Susumu Ishitani calls the 'inwardness' of his thinking not only cannot be separated from the physical and emotional experiences which gave rise to it, but cannot be seen as more valid.

Susumu Ishitani is not unaware of our kind of logic and thought processes but he paid us the compliment of trusting us with his own way, realising perhaps that not everyone would follow his progress. Bridging cultural differences can lead to new perspectives and if we can take this 'total' view, we shall be the richer.

Betty Bredt, 15.1.1986

LOOKING FOR MEANINGS OF MY A-BOMB EXPERIENCE IN NAGASAKI

Susumu Ishitani

Before I talk about my personal experiences of the A-bomb dropped in Nagasaki, I would like to make it very clear that I am not so much concerned with my being a victim of the bomb as with my being a part of the responsibility for what the Japanese have done, inflicting sufferings and sorrows upon other people. I am related to the responsibility of the Japanese who were the causes of the war and its disasters. Even though I was young during the war time, I cannot but feel guilty for the fact that I was completely cheated by the whole society surrounding me at that time. I believed that what the Japanese nation was doing was fully right and that Japanese military men would always behave right as models for us children to follow. After the Japanese surrender we came to know really shockingly that my country was intruding upon other nations and invading them rather than saving them from oppression and poverty. We could hardly believe that the Manchurian War was started due to the secret manipulation of the Japanese military. Most of the Japanese people were not informed at all of any wrong-doings by Japanese, such as the Korean and Taiwan colonial dominations, the massacre in Nanking, and the inhumane medical experiments on live human bodies by Japanese medical troops in the northern part of China. There are many other cruel deeds made by Japanese. And even today, in different ways from the former ways, Japanese are taking advantage of underprivileged people in different parts of the world in money-making. For me it is more important to remember the responsibility for the present problems rather than to think we are the victims of the last war. I really feel we Japanese need to ask for forgiveness from those who have suffered from the inhumane deeds of us Japanese. Therefore I want to begin this lecture by asking your forgiveness if there are any among you who had unhappy experiences with such Japanese wrong-doings, as I mentioned just now.

I must also confess that I sometimes wonder if I am qualified to be a victim or survivor of the A-bomb and to talk about my experience as one of the A-bomb experiences because my experiences have not been so terrible as many others have been. However, I am going to talk about them not because I want to describe what terrible things happened but because I want to go together with you on a further journey of enquiry to find the meanings of such experiences. Since personal experiences of anyone are partial and limited, they may not convey the destructive and disastrous pictures of the bomb enough. My experiences are

limited but they are more closely related to my identity than any other's. So these will form my topic.

I was in the eighth grade, at the age of thirteen when I was exposed to the A-bomb in Nagasaki. I was talking with my elder sister in the dining kitchen of our house after coming back from school on the day. We began to feel hungry and my sister had started cooking when we heard the buzzing sound of a US bomber. My sister, who had experienced some terrifying air-raids before she came to Nagasaki city, immediately recognised the sound as that of the B-29 and suggested that we go to the shelter for safety. But I who had not had any terrifying experiences of bombing said, "Well, Sister, they just came again. They wouldn't do any harm. So far Nagasaki has never been badly attacked. So we shall be all right." Before I had finished the last sentence, a strong glittering light had struck us. I thought it was the light of a flash-light bomb dropped by mistake on the top of the roof of my house. I dashed into the next room shouting out to my sister to come along, to hide myself from the light, proceeding to the corridor to get out of the front door. But before I reached the door I felt a strong blast approaching and I flattened myself on the floor. Soon I felt the blast arrive, smashing and blowing things around. I could not do anything but rely on God. In the moment when I felt the danger of death, a strong sensation of trusting God ran all through my body. It was a warm sensation like electricity, which made me feel that I would be definitely protected by God. Somehow I did not feel any fear. I concentrated all senses of awareness on the trust-feeling. Things were coming down near me. But I felt a kind of religious feeling and knew that I would not die, being protected by the divine power. It was a spark of the religious feelings of me which I had not been aware of in daily life. From time to time even today, I ruminate on this existential experience I had then under the dangerous conditions. I wonder what it was, and what it would mean to me.

After a while I opened my eyes but could not see anything but dust. Fearing the dust might get in my eyes, I closed them again and covered them tightly with my fingers without getting up. I did not feel any heat of fire around me. So I thought I had a good chance to survive. After a few minutes, I opened my eyes to find the dust cleared and my sister lying just close behind me, flat on the stomach just as I was. I patted her on the shoulders saying, "Sister!" She raised her face up to look at me. Her face was dirty with dust, her eyes shining wide open. Both of us suddenly burst into laughter almost at the same time. We did not know why we laughed. It came out from deep within us. It must have been really necessary for us to release the tension we had been holding during the frightening time of a few minutes and to recover a certain balance of our psychology.

Soon we decided that we should go to find my father. At that time we used to live in a house on the campus of a Christian women's college and high school named Kassui (Living Water) as my father was vice-president of the college. So we both went up to the school building to look for my father. Soon we were able to find him but I saw a stream of blood coming down from the top of his head when I saw him first. At the first sight of him, I was frightened to think he might be dying. He was being treated. He saw us and said, "Oh, you are safe here. Good. I am all right." In fact it was just a small cut on his head with a small piece of glass. The rest of my family were all out of the city fortunately. There were none of my family killed. In the area where we were nothing was burned but things were only destroyed by the blast of wind. The roof of my house was badly damaged so that it was not possible for us to live in the house until it was repaired. All pillars on one side of my house were leaning to one side and the other side pillars leaning to the opposite side. Window panes were all smashed into pieces and powder. Among the people treated where my father was, I saw a young man who had a big triangle-shaped piece of glass stuck deep into one of his upper arms. He asked a few strong men around him to pull out the piece of glass, with another man holding him tightly so that he did not move when the glass was finally taken out.

I was assigned to go to a shelter in a corner of a playground of the college. When I looked out at the far places of the city from the top of the hill, I could see the downtown area on the left was burning in flames very widely. Gas tanks were blowing up with terrifying noises. As the distance did not allow me to see people, I was not able to think of the people who were dying and crying out for help then in the flames. I was too shocked to think of anything. Only my head without power of imagination was vainly excited at that time, as I remember now.

For about ten days since then, I had to live in a primitive shelter dug under the ground together with some female teachers of the school and the several Japanese soldiers who were very badly burned by the rays as they had been working half-naked at the pier in the harbour. A few of them died in a few days. I helped them go to see the doctors who came to the campus grounds to treat the burned and wounded people who came to the area out of the devastated areas. After some days flies laid eggs in the pus of the burned flesh of the soldiers in my shelter. A terrible smell spread and filled the shelter. The soldiers felt apologetic about staying with us with their ugliness and the smell. But what else could have been done in such a situation! A great sympathy was shared among all who were in the same shelter, with nobody complaining. Many people came up for medical

treatment but the medical equipments were apparently lacking. I saw many people simply lying on the ground waiting to die with no one attending, groaning and asking for water in their feeble voices. Some of them could not move or make any sounds and were just left out on the playground with vacant-looking eyes open to the summer sky.

While we were living in the shelter, food was supplied to us through the Neighbourhood Organization channel, and the soldiers were provided with their food from the military separately from us. Every time food was brought to the soldiers, finding the kind of food brought to them far better than what we ordinary citizens got, the soldiers felt guilty and showed us their sympathy. They gave us some portion of what they were given. A few of the soldiers were not able to open their mouths due to the burns and could not eat at all. In those days in Japan all good things were used for the military and no-one was allowed to criticize it. In the name of "for defending our nation" the military took the best part of everything. But it was rather seldom that we were aware of such an actual difference as for this ease because military people usually lived apart from ordinary citizens. They were supplied white polished rice abundantly while citizens lived on sweet potatoes and not enough to fill their stomach.

On the 15th August, we were told to listen to the radio so that we could hear a very important item of news. A few families in the neighbourhood and several individuals who were separated from their families gathered together in one of our neighbour's houses to listen to a radio. Emperor Hirohito spoke regretfully to tell us that Japan had surrendered in order to survive as a race. Reception conditions for the radio broadcast were not good and it was not easy for us to know exactly what he said. But it was very clear that he said Japan had surrendered. It was a great shock to all of us who believed that Japan would never be defeated. And moreover surrender! A few soldiers who were there listening to the radio wept when they heard the Emperor's talk. I felt some sense of relief within myself, thinking that now we would be able to be free from fear of death and would not be bothered sleeping at night by air-raids. There were some people who were saying that the defeat news was wrong and that Japan would continue to fight as it used to do. Therefore we were not able to be quite sure how things would go and be settled for a few days even after the broadcast of the surrender.

I still remember vividly when the US warships and a Red Cross boat came into Nagasaki harbour. I could see them easily from our garden. A few days later the landing of the US military took place. Before that, there were rumours among the citizens that since the American soldiers were so cruel and wild, women and

children should leave the city to hide themselves in the mountains. My parents discussed whether they should do something about it and they decided by all means all of us would stick together staying in the city as usual whatever might happen. In spite of the terrible propaganda made by the government and school teachers and everyone, my parents must have had better knowledge of Americans in general than the average citizens of Japan at that time. I heard from somebody that at first black men of the US Marine Corps came ashore with automatic guns and with much tension of fear that there might be some suicidal Kamikaze attacks of Japanese soldiers or of citizens on them. The Christian women's college and high school where my father worked was occupied by white soldiers to live in. And a Catholic boys' high school building nearby was taken as a barracks for black soldiers. At that time in the US military the segregation was still kept on.

While US men stayed in the area, my family were able to find some place to live in the other houses belonging to the college. But in any case we lived almost next to the school building where the US soldiers lived. At first we were somewhat afraid of the American soldiers, who looked very much different from us Japanese, but we were full of curiosity and very eager to look at them. Of course the chewing gum and chocolate bars the American soldiers gave us were also elements of attraction to us young boys. American soldiers were very much surprised and pleased to find me able to speak a little bit of English and to find that we were acquainted with many of the world famous songs and Christian hymns to sing. We had a very good time singing songs common to Americans and us Japanese. My parents were able to speak English better than I did at that time. We had several GI boys as regular friends to meet almost every day on the road in front of the school gates. A few times at least my parents invited some of them to visit our family to talk and sing Christian hymns together. Even today I keep correspondence with one of the old day's GI friends. Many of the GI boys at that time were far more humane and intelligent than we expected and they too found us Japanese far more humane and intelligent than they thought we would have been. They were the Marine Corps soldiers who had rather severe fighting with Japanese soldiers in Saipan and other Pacific islands, losing many of their friends in battle. We established such a wonderful relationship that it was almost impossible for us to think that we had been hating each other as enemies. We really wondered why we had been made to fight like that. I still remember the names of several GIs familiar to us then: Joe, Bill, Dick, Flower, Vincent, Bakken, Saito-san and others.

I could go on and on, talking about the days I spent with those young American GIs, such as how we enjoyed eating, talking and singing on Christmas

eve for the first time after the war with the recognition of one another as human beings.

Joe whom I visited in his house in Syracuse when I went to the States as a government exchange program student wrote me in Japan a very moving letter when he knew of my mother's death about ten years ago, telling me how much he was impressed by her when he found her treating and even rebuking the young GI boys as human beings as she would do with her sons, just like their own American parents would have done to them. He emphasised the foolishness of wars and the importance of meeting people face to face to make a real foundation for peace. He is quite right. We have to change our old framework of thoughts into new ones in order to survive.

Though many people still take for granted the defence of one's own country, I can say clearly that it is impossible to defend or protect our life by means of arms now when such weapons as A-bombs, H-bombs, Neutron bombs, bacteriological weapons exist. Having strong military forces is contrary to democracy as the military always requires secrecy without letting voters know the essential knowledge to vote properly and to control the violent powers of the military. People must be well informed to determine their destiny. If we want to defend democracy, our life and human dignity, we must learn how to live in non-violent ways to establish human relations with those who might get into conflict in our survival. Meeting people is very much needed for us to recognise that we are all human beings who have joys and sorrows. We all have those who care for us as parents and brothers and sisters and friends. People need to meet in order to be inspired to change themselves into new people who know deeper quality of happiness related to the ever-lasting life.

When it was very cold in early spring after the year of the surrender had passed, my father coughed out much blood with tuberculosis at night. I have a very vivid memory of my elder brother and me running to one medical doctor or another to ask him to come and see my father coughing out blood very late on a cold dark night. He recovered slowly but he had to resign his job, and move to Mito, a city 100 kilometres north east of Tokyo. My father had to sustain his family consisting of his wife and five children, as if he were walking on a thin tight rope, and take great care of his own health for nearly ten years more.

As for my health, about half a year later I got blisters all over my body. The shape of those blisters was strange, looking like small round pancakes full of pus. I had swollen glands with a slight fever. I found it necessary sometimes to lie

down on the floor without participating in gym class because of the dullness and fever from the blisters. When we were kept standing for a long time in line at school I sometimes felt dizzy and had to leave the line. This was for the few years when I was still in Nagasaki. In those days I was apparently affected by the bomb but we did not know anything of the effects of the radio-activity.

It was hard for me to imagine so many people were vaporised to the air in an instant, or suffered till long death asking for water or calling the names of their parents, brothers and sisters in the hell-like fire. This kind of situation should not come to any people, children of any place or any country of the world in future.

Mito was the place where my father spent his three years of his high school life and used to attend a Quaker meeting by chance. He became one of the active young Friends there, lodging in a students' house set up and run by Friends. Therefore when he moved to this city from Nagasaki he took my elder brother and me to the Quaker meeting for worship on a Sunday. The city was extensively burned during the war and the meeting house was burnt down too. Therefore people were gathering in one of the 'tatami' rooms of the old people's house which was run by the Friends as a social welfare program. It was my first exposure to the quiet meditation service. We used to go to the Methodist churches near our home wherever we moved until then. Somehow I was attracted by the way of worship and was impressed by the messages shared by a few old people in the house. The messages were quite different from the sermons I used to listen to in churches. I felt comfortable to be in the silence without being bothered by vocal prayers with too much theological vocabulary and by the set procedure with standing up and sitting down. I felt I was able to be more honest about myself to God in Quaker silence.

One Sunday, we had an American young man coming from Tokyo where he worked on the staff of the American Friends Service Committee. He was Neil Hartman, who now lives in New Jersey, USA. He spoke to us about his own experience of being a conscientious objector to wars and the idea of Conscientious Objection. It was my first experience of hearing anything about Conscientious Objection. I was deeply moved to know that such a wonderful thing existed in this world. I never thought or even dreamed of such a thing even among Christians. In Japan, we looked at all Americans and British as enemies and were taught to look at them only as the objects to fight and kill; otherwise they who were enemies and beasts would come and kill us all in the most cruel ways. While I was listening to the young American, I was deeply moved to

believe that this person was pointing to a universal truth which I would like to emulate in my life.

He told how he refused to take part in the war according to his conscience. He believed that human life was sacred and divine, not to be subject to the desires of human beings and never to be ended, regardless of nationality, race or ideology. I felt that he was a real Christian who lived following the way of Christ. As his alternative service, he worked in the forest, in a mental hospital to look lovingly after the patients without any means to protect himself physically, and he became at the end even a guinea pig for a medical experiment. He lost one of his kidneys because of the experiment. He overcame the troubles with his own family and his communities around him due to his commitment to pacifism. I was then an eleventh grader. I felt I would like to live such an attractive life as his to be true to the universal way of God. I was drawn into Quaker ways. When I was a sophomore I became a member of the Religious Society of Friends. I came to feel that I am a person, and a Christian rather than a Japanese, a child of God rather than a Japanese, a human being rather than a member of a nation. It was my great joy to take part in Young Friends activities and organise workcamps as well as study on peace issues among Quakers in Japan.

I went to a Christian college founded by Southern Baptists who are very much fundamental. I was given a scholarship to study there for two years. I organised a small group of those who were interested in peace issues and at the cultural festival of the college we organised an exhibition of A-bomb pictures taken in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Some of the American missionaries did not like us doing such a thing but I had a firm conviction that it was right to show as many people as possible what would be the effects of nuclear war in order to let people feel that it is impossible for human beings to wage war any more. I heard at that time some Japanese people as well as Americans were trying to assert that those who exhibited such pictures were communists or pro-communist and anti-American. So I openly said that I was a Christian and I had many friends who were Americans. Nobody could deny what I said. I explained about the A-bomb in such a manner as only those who had experienced the bomb could do, by mentioning my own direct experiences in Nagasaki. I became more conscious of my being under the mushroom cloud. While I explained about the photos, I often talked about the ideas of Conscientious Objection, emphasising how important it is to Japan as a nation to commit herself to peaceful ways defined clearly in the new Constitution, which forbids the nation, Japan, to possess any military forces.

When I was in junior year, I decided to go to India to join an international workcamp sponsored by the Service Civil Internationale as a long term volunteer. At that time I felt I was not able to concentrate myself on study as much as I felt I should be doing. I felt I was moody. I needed to earn money to be as much independent from my father financially as I could. My vision for my future was not very clear to me. In these circumstances going to India was very attractive, because India at that time was the third power in world politics, trying to be neutral between the two big powers. Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister was holding a good relationship then with Communist China. I was interested in Gandhian philosophy too. I was lucky to have very good understanding parents who let me go wherever I wanted to go, even though some of our acquaintances said that we should finish school education as soon as possible so that my brother and I could lighten the financial burden of my father. It was a very precious time for me when I was in India. I was given the privilege of staying for two months in a Gandhian asylum in the western part of India by UNESCO which granted me a youth travel grant to cover the travel expenses between Japan and India.

After a year and two months stay in India, I had to return home a few months earlier than I planned due to a tropical illness I caught in the flooded area in Bihar. I was exposed to much more dreadful conditions of poverty than I experienced right after the war in Japan. I was sad to see the situation but at the same time I was impressed to see such poor people were living just like we were with joy and sorrow. I began to think of my existence. I came to realise that my being a Japanese was not my choice, that I was thrown into where I was by something beyond myself, into my family, into Japan, and at this particular time of the process of human history. I sensed wherever I moved that human beings were just like my family members and friends. Some racists might think that we should be loyal to our own country but I felt already then that I was one of God's children and should consider every man and woman as precious as anybody else regardless of his or her nationality, sex, colour, and social status. I could feel then I needed to be able to live and die like Jesus Christ who died for the benefit of other human beings and for the glory of the divine. I was able to enjoy the life in India among amiable friends from many different countries.

We sometimes hear people involved in peace movements in Japan say a phrase "Hiroshima of anger and Nagasaki of prayer". Often when they say this, they mean that in Hiroshima active peace movements come out of the anger of the victims of the A-bomb and in Nagasaki people never stand up against anything but pray for help without doing anything positive, depending on either their fate or some authority. We cannot deny that in Hiroshima we always find some

activities regarding peace going on while visitors to the A-bomb museum in Nagasaki find very few peace activities. But I wonder if anger can really produce anything of peace? How about prayer? According to my understanding, anger needs to be checked carefully so that it does not produce hatred which is one of the elements of war. I can admit that indignation against injustice is necessary to create peace that should be based on justice. The energy that comes out of indignation can be the source for the energy to push us to work for peace-making. The energy to create anything has to be directed through the right channels. It cannot be creative if the anger is aimed at either American people or Russian people. Indignation has to be addressed to what cruel deeds we Japanese people did just as equally to what the American military did, but not to military men as persons. Indignation should be directed to oneself for one's being cheated or manipulated by the state.

Out of my thoughts just mentioned, I came to feel that I should do something to find out what the silence of Nagasaki is and why it is so. It became my natural interest as I am a survivor of the Nagasaki A-bomb and a Christian. I did not like to see people feeling that prayers are something negative. I know in Australia, New Zealand, America and Europe the role of prayer is basic and an important aid for people to stand up and carry on their peace works. Therefore I decided to go home and spend some time in Nagasaki during my vacation, long after I left the city in 1947. During summer in 1983 and during spring in the next year I spent about ten days altogether, meeting several Catholic survivors in the Urakami area which was badly affected by the A-bomb. There is a famous Urakami cathedral where many Catholics have lived and died for a long time since the 16th century. Nagasaki had been a special place historically for its free trade with the Dutch and Portuguese under the strict supervision of the Shogunate's government before the modernisation of Japan.

I had an opportunity to have an interview with three women who were all victims of the A-bomb and descendants of the old time Kirishitans (that is what Catholics were called in Japan in those old days). The place was the Old People's Hospital Community run by the Sacred Heart Holy Mothers Association in Nagasaki. It was about one hour's interview. The women talked to me much more easily than I expected. It helped for them to speak as a small group. Of course, my self-introduction helped them to open their mouths too. While they talked one of them coughed hard once or twice so that we had to stop interviewing to take rest a while and then another of them said she had pains on the waist bone, and I had to give massage to her, while listening to the others talking. I set a tape-recorder in front of them to tape their voices after getting permission from them. The eldest

lady was then eighty four. Her house was only a mile away from the centre-point of the Bomb and burnt down. She was fortunately out of the area to live in the hilly place. She took care of the rest of her family and relatives who were badly affected by the bomb and she became sick later on. She lost her only grand child then and later her youngest son who was in the navy in the Pacific, only a day or two before the end of the war. When I asked a very difficult question: what had she learned out of such terrible A-bomb experiences for her to live on, how she had found some spiritual support to her, she was puzzled. It was no wonder. Because even I who was asking the questions had not found any clear answer for myself.

I had to change my question then. I asked how she would relate the A-bomb experience to her faith in God, Jesus Christ and Mary. I was asking myself how I would reply had I been asked a similar question. She told me that she had been told by her mother about the "trip". It was the harsh experience for the Catholic Christians in Nagasaki to leave their home and be expelled to unknown places simply because they were Christians a long time ago. In the second year of Meiji, 1869, 3394 of them were expelled to 21 different districts from the Urakami area of Nagasaki. The persecution by the Government officers was very severe and cruel. The elderly lady associated the "trip" of the exile of her ancestors with her own A-bomb experience. About 8500 Catholic family members died from the blast while the total death toll in Nagasaki on the instant was 70,000 approximately. We extended our talk into the suffering of Job of the Old Testament.

One of the things that impressed me most was the influence on the Catholic survivors in Nagasaki from the Pope's visit to this city in snow in February 1981. Many of the people told me how much they were moved by the eagerness of the Pope for peace.

Another thing which impressed me was that the late medical Dr. Takashi Nagai's footprints of his journey after the A-bomb were deep in the hearts and minds of many people there. At the sacrifice of his own weak physical conditions affected by the radiation, he devoted himself as a medical doctor to the care of those who suffered the burns and injuries from the bomb. He had lost his beloved wife under the mushroom cloud. Later he himself stayed in bed with two young children of primary school age who took care of him till his death. He wrote many essays, stories and letters which showed his abundant love to his children who would soon be left to be orphans by their father. His "Leaving these Children". and "The Bell of Nagasaki" are two of his many books published after he died.

Many people outside of the Catholic world read them but especially the Catholics in Nagasaki who received most impact from his writings. As for the significance of the A-bomb he wrote "We were chosen to be an atonement by becoming sacrifices". "It was by His plan that the A-bomb was dropped upon Urakami rather than any other place. It is a grace of God. Urakami people must be thankful to God." "Only belief can be the real momentum to restore the burnt fields of Nagasaki." He spoke of the view point far beyond the natural cause-effect relationship, to those who suffered together the sufferings and sorrows of the A-bomb as well as shared a religious faith with him. Dr. Nagai took in the experience existentially and spoke as one of the leading elders in the Church to appeal to the people so that they might live with hope for the future. He said, "A very small number of the people who live with a firm faith to live and know the happiness of suffering and of weeping, are doing an atoning work for sins human beings had committed for centuries." I feel this aspect of his expression cannot be understood by most non-religious people. We must get into the depth of the writer's experience by associating it with our own deep experiences. Doing as much service as he could, Dr. Nagai knew he would not live long any more and had to leave his young children behind. I think such an answer as the one Dr. Nagai made to the question of what the meaning of the A-bomb was to the Catholics in Nagasaki should not be taken as a formula without putting oneself in a similar situation.

Dr. Sinichiro Akizuki of St. Francisco Hospital is another Catholic medical doctor who worked very hard and devotedly in medical care of the victims. He became a Catholic believer after seeing how Catholic sisters and brothers and priests devoted themselves to the service of helping suffering people after the A-bomb was dropped. He said that he was not satisfied with the praying only without any actual deeds. He found many of the Catholic believers who relied on God or the Church without taking any responsibilities on their side. He said, "People around me prayed for me to become a Catholic, and even those who were dying under my care prayed for me to become one. I saw priests and sisters around me doing a beautiful service to the people suffering near them. Then I felt I could not stay away from the same religious community". He had been a serious Buddhist till then.

A lady I talked with said, "We gradually felt it is not enough for us to complain, saying that the A-bomb was horrifying, and to say that we suffered this and that, the pains and sorrows. While we were talking with one another among the survivors, we came to realize we should talk to a wider circle and we must give comfort and help to others with sympathy. We cannot only give comfort to

others. We have to share the indignation about what human beings should not do. We should do something together to care for life, cultivate the sense of tenderness and extend it more widely, and pray together with humbleness". She is in one of the small religious groups which seek to share spiritual growth, having study meetings and explore the meanings of A-bomb experiences together.

Human beings originally do not exist in solitude, separate from one another, but exist as social beings with warm feelings of humanity. The proof can be found among the suffering people in the situations under the mushroom clouds. When a father finally succeeded in getting out of the pile of fallen timbers and concrete things and found his wife unable to get out to safety from the approaching fire, he said, "I would stay with you and die together", after trying in vain to get her out. She said, "Save yourself, please, lest our children should be left without both parents". A boy who witnessed all of the tense situation of his parents' departure from one another has written describing what he has seen and heard. He was a sixth-grader then. His father cried and wept aloud while moving away from his wife taking his son's hand. This boy lived to tell people about the A-bomb and not only about the ugliness of wars but about the beauty of human nature, too.

Out of such miserable situations some people have decided to make a new start in their life. They even say that it has to be made as a start of a new world for humanity. They chose how to live by taking an initiative on their part to put new meaning in their lives. Of course, they need to be careful to make such meaning a universal one to each member of humanity. For many, the meaning was found in a religious sphere. For some religious people, the existing belief is being re-examined and tested to see whether it can be really supportive for their life, to live with hope in real situations.

For me, my A-bomb experience seems to me to be something given to me from which I am expected to draw meaning and power to live in such a way as to be an instrument of God or to show the glory of God. I do not think I have found all of the meaning or power that is expected for me to draw out of my experience yet. It must be an endless or bottomless source to draw living water for me to look back or return in order to refresh my awareness that I live in the hand of God while being on the edge of the division of life and death. For we all live in such an existential condition in the nuclear age today. As we look at our living situation, we realise the development of science and technology has put us in a dangerous situation as at any moment we might be killed by the explosive power of science and technology. Economic competition has put us in such a situation as we might

be treating other human beings as tools and slaves without being able to treat others as persons who are as important and precious as we ourselves are. And the end of these trends leads us to wars and annihilation of mankind. We should have fully realised that we are forced by these conditions to be aware of the necessity of determining our decisive attitude to choose life rather than destruction even at the sacrifice of our easy ways of getting more material abundance, more convenience and superficial pride of being better than others in worldly life.

I happened to find myself in the historical event of the explosion of the A-bomb. A Japanese philosopher whom I know well is advocating his idea that the calendar year should start from 1945, when the nuclear age started, because it is so significant for human conditions in the history of mankind. I agree with him in the sense that the epoch-making event of the birth of possibility of self-annihilation of mankind urges us human beings to make radical changes for our survival, for finding a peaceful solution of conflicts, for creating a new loving way shown by God in the way of Jesus Christ on the cross and on His resurrection. Light is going to be revealed by the darkness of the annihilating bombs to shine and show a new caring way. We are in the middle of the time of awakening our souls to repent and change.

Now I am involved in propagating the idea of tax refusal against military expenditures in Japan on the basis of conscience. For me this idea is based on the reflection of my experience of the A-bomb. It is based on my meeting an American conscientious objector after the end of the war, too. Today, when anything can be bought by paying money, soldiers and generals, fighters and bombers, nuclear and other weapons can be obtained by money. On the other hand, there are billions of people on the globe starving to death without being able to buy land to cultivate and food to fill their stomachs.

I met questions raised by some of the survivors such as this, "Why do we have to suffer from such unbearable pains and sorrows as this?" I found in the writings of the survivors similar statements fairly often. And I tried to find some words for them while knowing fully that the reality of suffering for them will never be understood fully by me as they have been experiencing it. While I was pondering what to answer, one of the passages of the Bible came to mind. It is the ninth chapter of the gospel of John: When Jesus was asked by his disciples, "Rabbi, who sinned, this fellow or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "This has not happened because he has sinned or his parents, but that in him God's works should be displayed." Another passage says as follows:

"Do not be surprised, dear friends, at the fiery test that is coming upon you, as if you were experiencing something unheard of. Instead, be joyful that you are sharing to some degree the sufferings of Christ, in order that at the revealing of His glory you may be full of joy." (1 Peter 4th Chapter, 12-13).

I also found another passage:

"Exercise self-control. Be on your guard. Your opponent, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion in search of someone to devour. Firm in your faith, resist him, aware that throughout the world, sufferings of this kind are imposed upon your brothers. But the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will, after you have suffered awhile, Himself equip, stabilise, strengthen and firmly establish you." (1 Peter 5th Chapter, 8-10)

When I was in bed at a hospital for my ulcer to be operated, in 1980, I had to face certain fears of my death and the suffering and pain. At that time I enjoyed reading the Bible and trying to draw as much meaning as possible for me to overcome the fears, sufferings and pain. I thought of Jesus on the cross who faced much more severely than I did. Maybe I should say that the fears did not exist with Jesus and it was the same almost to me too. I say "almost" because in my case, I had a little bit of sense of uncertainty, though it was very small, that I might die, leaving the rest of my family, my wife and my three young children who would need some care from their father. As a whole, I did not have a bad time at all in the hospital. I felt I was so blessed and happy and was able to keep my faith in God to be able to approach other people in the hospital as I wanted to. I felt my way of life went into the depths one step deeper by facing the incident of the operation.

The other day, I found a poem in a Japanese Christian newspaper and thought the poem was expressing an important aspect of our search for meaning in our life. It goes like this according to my English translation:

If not having become ill,
such prayers would not have come out.
If not having become ill,
such miracle would not have been believed in.

If not having become ill,

such divine world would not have been heard of.
If not having become ill,
such holy sacred place would not have been visited.
If not having become ill,
such a face would not have been gazed at.
Oh! unless having become ill,
I would not have been able to become a human.

In our life we have sorrows to face and they come without our comprehension why they should come in our particular place, particular time and to a particular person like you or me.

Sorrow, however, is a good medicine for the soul. Those who do not drink from the cup of sorrow will never understand the significance of our life. Because of being in adverse situations, one can come to understand the importance of kindness to others. Having adverse, unfavourable experiences one can come to know the truth which one will never be able to know through academic study nor by common sense. One gains the power of courage to overcome the adverse situation and deepens the understanding of others who are in adverse situations. Inazo Nitobe, the first Japanese Quaker, emphasised the importance and effects of adverse situations. He said,

"There are some people who abandon themselves to despair and others who will live a truthful life because of sorrows they have faced. Sorrows are the dividing points of life. Those who cannot discern whether this sorrow comes from the divine or from the devil will be bound to stay in hell forever."

Here I am in Australia and will visit New Zealand later. I have been to so many places in the world after the A-bomb experience: India, Korea, Hong Kong, USA, UK, USSR, Switzerland, Holland, Germany, France, Mexico, Philippines and Belau Islands. This morning David Gray mentioned the central core of Quaker belief is "The Inner Light" in all of us. I sense it is true. And I feel and believe through my experiences that we are made "to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone". I am grateful to you as a part of the channel of the eternal life for letting me walk cheerfully like this today.

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