

## The Day God Smiles – Why Do I Translate the Bible? (3)

Actually, it is part of the question “When will be the day God smiles?” -- a question I will try to answer to the best of my knowledge.

To do that, let me start from a direction remotely related. When I heard Pope Francis use the expression “a kick where the sun does not shine” I almost applauded. No, let me correct myself. I did applaud. The reason is, I can relate to what the Pope was saying as a human being and as a Christian at the same time. Only, as a Taiwanese, I would use expressions more direct and figurative! Should someone insult me, I might turn the other cheek to him; however, should someone have insulted my mother, I would surely have kicked him in the ass! (That was what the Pope was referring!)

When I see open-mindedness -- which to me is simply the other side of the coin called honesty -- especially those instances expressed by the highly revered religious figures, hope is stirred up in me. I firmly believe that open-mindedness is one of the tickets that we all must have to go through this difficult time in history. Time and gain in history, we have been shown that wisdom and courage go hand in hand, and that they all come from open-mindedness, and that therefore open-mindedness, wisdom and courage are the golden triangle that can really solve problems and endures the tests of time.

The other news that encouraged me big time was when the National Cathedral invited the Moslems to go there and pray. Yes, there was one lady who went there to show her opposition. But, imagine, among millions of Christians who follow Jesus Christ, and there was only one who actually went there to demonstrate against the idea. To me, it is an indication that people in general are at least tolerant of other people’s religions.

As a kid and in Taiwan, I really did not know very much about the differences among different religious followers. The only vague idea that I had, which I am sure a lot of people my age had, was the difference between ‘someone who does not eat pork’ and ‘someone who does not eat beef’. It so happened that due to some traditional ideas which actually had nothing to do with Buddhism some Taiwanese farmers refrained themselves from eating beef, and they happened to be Buddhists. The other side was clearer. They came from the Xinjiang (新疆省) province and they were Moslems and they did not eat pork. And they all had the same family name, which was 馬. Now I realize this family name actually was the Mandarin translation of Mohammed.

We lived together in perfect harmony, believing and taking it for granted that all religions encouraged people to do good and to help one another.

And, oh yes, Christians ate both.

And, of course, that was not the reason I converted to Christianity. Strictly speaking, I am still an infant in Christianity. I should not say I know a lot about Christianity either. But I am very clear of one thing: the God that I knew before I became a Christian is exactly the same God that I know now. In other words, there is only one God. Furtherly – I know I will get in trouble by saying this, but I have to say this – it really does not matter what religion you belong to, as long as the religion is a proper one, it is the same God that you believe in.

Therefore, I know when God is not smiling: when people chop other people’s heads off for ‘religious’ reasons, God will not be smiling.

All proper religions are encouraging people to do good deeds. People who use 'religion' as a pretense and excuse to kill and to persecute are the real enemies of their own religions. And, of course, if one thinks it is okay to insult other people's religions and gets himself in trouble, I would say, it is probably not the 'wisest' idea.

But who am I to judge?

Just to have some fun. While translating the Bible, I came across the following pieces. If you have a Chinese friend, or if you know someone who knows Chinese, show him/her the Chinese translations. From his or her reactions, you might witness how close ideas from different religions are. (In this case: Christianity, and Buddhism)

Here we go.

6 無可置疑的，敬神外加上滿足，真的是好處多端；7 我們瞭解我們來空空，去也空空，8 在這眨眼就消逝的時空裏面，夠喫夠穿就滿足了。9 那些渴求財富的陷入誘人的圈套之中，沒有意義祇有害處的渴想把人導向毀滅和死亡。10 愛錢是萬惡之根，有些人爲了愛錢，寧可丟棄所信，寧可把刺蝟皮衣反穿在身上，讓自己痛苦萬狀，怎麼知道剛剛好夠的人享的是神仙之樂。（鐵木前書六章）

6 Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; 7 for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it, 8 but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. 9 But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains. (1Timothy-6)

Another piece:

11 神的慈悲已向世人顯示，要解救衆生，12 訓練我們專以虔心聖潔爲念，拋棄世俗雜念，在現世則以自律，正直，和敬神爲生活準則，13 在另一方面，我們引頸嚮往，期待神和救主基督耶穌施展萬丈光耀的神通。14 那位犧牲自己解救我們，叫我們不再打滾於罪惡的泥窩，把我們自己洗浴的乾乾淨淨，徹頭徹尾，從內向外直以善行爲念，完完全全仿效的基督耶穌。（提圖書二章）

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, 12 training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. 14 He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds. (Titus-2)

For the first piece, one could hardly believe that the letter was written two thousand years ago! Every word rings so true as if it were spoken yesterday! A Buddhist reader will have no problem digesting this piece, word for word. The second piece will ring very true to a Buddhist's ears also.

Religious elements aside, Confucius would also agree completely with what they were saying, although Confucius himself was a moralist, not a religious figure.