

The Christian hymn "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" brings tears to one's eyes

JD

I attended wedding rites twice in the Bancho-Church, Tokyo.

The first time was on Jan. 27, 2001 when my elder daughter got married, I attended it with my wife.

The second time was on May 30, 2010 when my niece got married, I attended it alone, for my wife had passed away on March 19, 2010.



According to an order of a ceremony, all the attendees sang the Christian hymn "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."

In 2001, I saw my wife standing next to me tearing while singing.

In 2010, I couldn't help but cry, particularly the hymn was in the first-person plural

"Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
**Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?**
Jesus knows our every weakness,
Take it to the Lord in prayer."



※
to listen to it,
click here

The words "Can we find a friend so faithful, Who will all our sorrows share" made me cry.

When singing, I remembered The Gospel According to Saint John "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you."

God loves humanbeings, and based on it God commands them to love one's neighbors and enemies, that is Christianity is the religion of love. Based on this mutual love, Jesus is regarded as one's friend.

And the word "love" is essentially a self-love accompanied with desires to possess. Therefore love causes obsession with one's dear one. So love is the reverse side of malice as well. The sense of command in Christianity is thus born, and beings connected with each other by this feeling of obsession(, or love,) are friends with each other.

While in Buddhism, 法句經(ほっくきょう=Hokkukyo=Dhammapada), a versified Buddhist scripture traditionally ascribed to the Buddha himself, symbolically says

"From love comes grief, from love comes fear;
he who is free from love knows neither grief nor fear."

Like that, love in Buddhism is considered something to abhor. In Buddhism, having compassion for others and considering things from another person's perspective is thought to be an ideal. In this sense Buddhism could be said as the religion of compassion, which is called 慈悲(じひ=jihi) in Japanese. The two characters that make up the word jihi, compassion, refer to giving comfort to others and taking away their sufferings, and together this concept is expressed as "giving pleasure and removing suffering." So, this may be considered close to the concept of love within Christianity.

I think the crucial difference between Christian ideal and Buddhist ideal is that: "love in Christianity" indicates love for a particular person, while "compassion, or jihi, in Buddhism" represents one's friendship with all people, not with a particular person. (Ji in jihi originally means Sanskrit "Maitori (maitrii)", which is produced from the "Mitra" (mitra) abstract nouns made from primarily a "friendship," or "brother.")

When singing in 2010, I thought of such things and continuously shed tears, fully realizing the forfeit of love with my wife due to her demise.

And when I see her again in the next world, I'll ask her why she shed tears in 2001.

※Anyway, the hymn is really nice, so enjoy it by clicking the black-and-white photo above.