

God on Sale
By Warren C. Trenchard
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Recently, I was in an Asian market with my wife and noticed a sign announcing that god was on sale. Although I had not thought of the place as a religious institution, I was certainly intrigued and took a closer look. Sure enough, the price for god had been significantly reduced 25% from \$3.99 to \$2.99! In other words, what had already been a great bargain – god for \$3.99 – was now even more incredible, as the sign called it, an “UNBEATABLE PRICE!”. In fact, lest there be any doubt that this amazing deal involved the real thing and not some metaphorical substitute, the sign even described the product as the “literal god.” The only caveat was that customers could buy only one each. I guess they had determined that no one person could have more than one god at a time.

As I read more, I learned that this low-cost deity, maybe Neptune-like, had some relationship to the ocean. Apparently, it also had an unusual color, being identified as “Kwangcheon Green Tea Seaweed.” Well at first, that was rather disappointing – god being green seaweed! But then I looked at the sale price again and decided, that at such a bargain cost, one should not really be too particular. When would I ever again be able to buy my own god for \$2.99? However, what was this “Kwangcheon”? I had no clue. Maybe the rest of the sign would help: “Tinan only snack Kai Xing literal god.” Well, all I could get from that, besides the fact that this was really god, was that this was apparently something to eat as a snack. Was this a kind of Asian Eucharist host? My wife says that this is not from Korean and must be based on Chinese.

Time to find someone who knows Chinese. . . . I just got back from showing this to some friends from Taiwan. They were able to determine that this divine product was actually Taiwanese. The English “translator” probably misrepresented a city in Taiwan with the word “Tinan.” They understand “Kwangcheon” to likely be a tradename, with “Kai Xing” probably conveying the notion of some kind of good feeling. So, that all suggests that this cheap, marine god from Taiwan was capable of making its owner feel really good.

That led me finally to conclude that “literal god” was likely just another typo by the “translator.” He/she must simply have had “real(ly) good” in mind. What a disappointment! The sign had led me to assume that a genuine god was for sale at a very good, discounted price. I wasn’t even concerned when I learned that this might be a Taiwanese deity. Oh well, it’s back to the unseen and the unattainable or, at least, to the *mysterium tremendum*.

