

Ancient Greek and Roman Religions

Ancient Greek and Roman religions were more cult practices than religions; there was no set of theological beliefs nor a specific moral code to be observed. People practiced the cult to keep the gods friendly. In a sense, these ancient religions were paganistic -- the gods were not morally superior to mortals. There was a close connection between magic and religion. Magic was you doing it rather than appealing to the gods for it to get done.

Greek Gods had individual personalities. Romans had no personalized gods, they worshipped power. Roman religion was like electricity -- we can't see it or smell it, but we understand how to use it. If we connect the wires it works. The Roman genius was the acquisition and management of power. Religion was a way to manage the power of the gods.

Romans religion was contaminated by Greek religion; most of the gods were similar. However, their gods of war were quite different. Mars, the Roman god of war was powerful, whereas the greek god Ares was more of a buffoon.

As the classical world aged, and city states passed away, other forms of religion came along which tried to do what modern religion does. Some example are Orphism, ISIS worship, and Mithraism. Isis worship was close to christianity -- it required a certain moral way of life for well-being in both this world and the next.

Homer said that gods are immortal, better looking, faster, stronger than humans, but not morally different. While this was the thought of the time, Homer and others writings were literary creations, and not very good indications of real religions in Greek and Roman worlds.

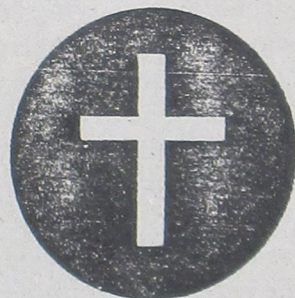
Chinese Folk Religions and Confucianism

Chinese mythology points to an indefinitely long period of time. Reliable history begins with the Shang dynasty (1523-1028 B.C.), when religion rather than philosophy was still the controlling force over the minds of men. Departed ancestors acted as intercessors between men and spirits, and the various spirits were ruled over by shang-ti, the Supreme Lord. Confucianism was the most influential philosophical system not only in China but also in Korea, Japan and

Vietnam. The teachings of Confucius go back to 551-479 B.C. The Chinese have honoured Confucius as their "Supreme Sage and Foremost Teacher." Confucius carried over certain ideas from antiquity, but also introduced the unitary principle of jen, translated as benevolence, love, manhood, human-heartedness. "What one does not wish to be done unto, do not do to others" is a well-known saying of Confucius. In the system of Confucius, ethics, politics, and education work hand in hand, and the super virtue of jen in the unifying principle.

Taoism was founded by Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu. Their teachings deal with the central notion of the Tao. Tao, which means "path" or "road", has come to signify the basic principle that pervades man and the universe. Taoism in the philosophy of "live and let live". The spirit of Taoism has pervaded many aspects of Chinese culture, such as art and literature, particularly landscape painting and nature poetry.

Other Chinese religions include Moism, The School of Logicians The School of Diviners, and Legalism.



Christianity

IT'S EASY TO BE A CHRISTIAN

Perhaps the most misused word used in relation to Christianity is the word "faith". For many, it is used simply to denote irrational belief -- blindly believing in a God Who does not exist. It is used almost to dismiss Christianity as a mere idiosyncrasy, another twist in the "anything goes" world of religion. "Well, it's just a matter of faith..." But the Christian understanding of faith is more than just belief in the invisible. Faith, quite simply, equals trust. Trust is confidence that we have in another person, a confidence gained by prior knowledge of that person's trustworthiness. In other words, my faith in a friend is confidence that he will act a certain way, based on his past performance. Applied to God, that term gains great significance. Faith in God is trust that He will act a certain way, because we know how He has acted in the past. It is our confidence, based on His past behavior. So what is His past behavior? The Bible tells us that He called certain people to be His and made promises to them, based