

"TRY YOUR BEST TO TREAT OTHERS AS YOU WOULD WISH TO BE TREATED YOURSELF, AND YOU WILL FIND THAT THIS IS THE SHORTEST WAY TO BENEVOLENCE."

— MENCIUS (C. 372-289 BCE) VII.A.4

CONFUCIANISM — An Overview

Inception: Confucius 551-479 BCE

Adherents: 6.3 Million [EBI Estimate]

Primary Value Proposition: Jen (goodness, humaneness, love) is the inner ideal for the greatest principle of living whereas Li (social propriety) is its outward expression. Together Li and Jen are the virtues of a superior man.

The Word of (about and/or attributed to) God:

- What Heaven appoints is without error.
- Everything originates in Heaven, and the Great Heaven makes no mistakes.
- Great, very great, is the One God who rules man from on high.
- Heaven's bounty never stops. Benevolence is Heaven's choicest gift to men. Heaven has bestowed its nobility upon the soul of man; the virtues of man are the fruit of this endowment of Heaven's nobility.
- The Great Heaven is all-discerning and goes with man in all his doings. And we do well when we call the Great Heaven our Father and our Mother.
- At all times and in everything let us stand in awe of the majesty of Heaven.
- God is with us; therefore we have no fear in our hearts.
- If there be found any virtue in me, it is the manifestation of Heaven who abides with me.
- Heaven deals with man's soul in accordance with its purpose.
- To attain the perfection of Heaven is the goal of man.
- God is with you; have no doubt in your heart.

Core Beliefs: In Confucianism, human beings are teachable, improvable and perfectible through personal and communal endeavor, especially where it includes self-cultivation and self-creation. A main idea of Confucianism is the cultivation of virtue and the development of moral perfection. Confucianism holds that one should give up one's life, if necessary, either passively or actively, for the sake of upholding the cardinal moral values of ren (humanity) and yi (righteousness).

Confucius perceived that all men are born with intrinsic similarities, but that they are also conditioned and influenced by study and practice. His concept of humaneness is probably best expressed in his version of the Ethic of reciprocity (the Golden Rule): "do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you." Confucius never stated whether man was born good or evil, noting that 'By nature men are similar; by practice men are wide apart.'