

Religion

Can religion exist as it had in the ancient world? How do religions such as Christianity and Buddhism survive in the modern world?

The natural advantages and richness surrounding people deeply influenced religious beliefs and practices of ancient people. Their perspectives on life and death were greatly influenced by their environment. Life just like the land renewing year after year was seen as something cyclical. It was their belief that there would be life after death, or that there was renewal of life after death. They believed that natural forces such as the forces coming from the river, the winds and goddesses. They believed that gods and goddesses were responsible for the natural world and human fortunes. When nature was deemed benevolent this was viewed as the workings of caring gods and goddesses. For events of hardships, difficulties, conflicts, wars there were certainly gods and goddesses producing negative forces. The religious belief of ancient people strongly impacted the development of culture. People's beliefs were based on unorganized collection of ancient mythologies, worship of nature and a large number of gods and goddesses. Moreover, religion then appeared to be a vital factor in the creation, growth and control of the starting phase of civilization. Religion existed as ancient's people way of finding explanation for everything and of relating with each other through the celebration of the same faith. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2005)

Modern religion like the ancient religion has been deeply influenced by what surround people. However, this time the natural advantages turned into technological advancement; the richness surrounding people became poverty. People have now known what causes natural events and man's misfortunes or fortunes. Today's religious practices are quite different from

the ancient religion. Religious rituals today are mostly made to attain peace, unity and love among others; to commune with one God and not with the so many gods and goddesses.

With the advent of advanced technology that explains things and provides man of various comforts and sometimes, even power... man does not need religion to explain phenomenon. He has the power of co-creation with the Creator. With globalization, man has come to an understanding that there could only be one God despite the differences in religion, traditions and cultures.

Peace, love and compassion have become central to the teachings of different religions. Buddhism and Christianity for instance are two religions from diverse group of people meeting to reveal that understanding of both religions awakens people to the connection between them. This implies that both faiths be tolerant of one another.

This is the message of Thich Nhat Hanh that he conveys in his book entitled “Living Buddha, Living Christ” for Christianity and Buddhism to co-exist with each other in the condition that he terms as Interbeing. “Buddhism is made only of non-Buddhist elements, including Christian ones, and Christianity is made of non-Christian elements, including Buddhist ones. We have different roots, traditions, and way of seeing, but we share the common qualities of love, understanding, and acceptance.” It is his way of saying that what consist Christianity and Buddhism are the same elements, therefore there is no point of contention.

This very much relies on the capacity of man to make peace with himself. Whatever the religion is, as long as man is at war within himself, he could never make peace outside of his being. In this particular aspect both Buddhism and Christianity agree. Christianity has the belief in the power of the Holy Spirit for peace; Buddhism has meditation (looking deeply) for the same peace.

Hence in the spirit of unity, brotherhood and peace, Buddhism and Christianity survive in the modern world.

References:

Hanh, Thich Nhat (1995) *Living Buddha, Living Christ*. Berkley Publishing Group.

Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia (2005) Egyptian Mythology. Microsoft Corporation