

The Roman Catholic Church calls confirmation one of its sacraments of initiation. When a priest baptizes an adult, he administers confirmation immediately. Usually this ceremony takes place at the Easter vigil. Most Catholics are baptized as infants, however, and a bishop confirms them after they have completed a period of catechesis. The recommended age for confirmation varies considerably throughout the Catholic world; in the USA alone, the age ranges from about 7 to about 16. Some are confirmed much later; others never. When other Christians become Catholic, a priest confirms them immediately upon receiving them into the full communion of the church.

In the Orthodox churches, chrismation*, a sacrament, is conferred on the newly baptized (adult or infant) by the priest immediately after baptism* to impart the gift of the Holy* Spirit.

The meaning of confirmation, sometimes with other titles, varies among other Christian groups. Many see it as a person's reaffirmation of baptism in the presence of a church leader or community.

PAUL TURNER

Confiteor (Lat "I confess"), mutual confession and forgiveness of sins by the priest and congregation at the beginning of the Roman Mass, a practice that originated in monastic communities.

CONFUCIANISM AND CHRISTIANITY CLUSTER

Confucianism and Christianity: Confucian and Christian Perspectives

Confucianism and Christianity in Hong Kong

Confucian Classics and the Bible

Confucianism and Christianity: Confucian and Christian Perspectives. The term "Confucianism" was introduced by Jesuit missionaries in China as a neologism for a scholastic tradition rooted in Chinese culture and philosophy that is variously referred to as *rujia* (school of the literati), *rujiao* (traditions of the literati), *rujue* (teachings of the literati), or simply *ru* (literati). While the *ru* tradition itself predates Confucius, the ethical vision of Confucius (c551–c479 BCE) and his followers has come to define and enrich this tradition.

The point of convergence of various schools within Confucianism is the existential questions regarding the ultimate values that shape human living. Confucius and his successors answered these questions by presenting an ideal person who is adept at relating to others and able to trust in the validity of these relations for familial and social harmony. In the *Analects*, Confucius called this ideal person a *junzi* (exemplary person), and the highest existential virtue that this exemplary person embodies he called *ren* (humanness).

The classical Confucian paradigm for virtuous living is the proper self-cultivation of the "Five Constants" (*wu chang*), i.e. *ren* (humanness), *yi* (appropriateness), *li* (ritualized propriety), *zhi* (wisdom in thought and action), and *xin* (keeping to one's word). Confucians insist that one must go beyond merely knowing these virtues in an intellectual sense; one must engage in the actual personal self-cultivation of the Five Constants. Complementing the Five Constants are the "Five Relations" (*wu lun*), which define the five foundational relations of a Confucian society on which the complex, interlocking human relations in Chinese society are constructed: parent–child, ruler–subject, husband–wife, elder–younger siblings, and friend–friend. The first four relations are hierarchical, whereas the fifth is a relation of equals. The Confucian conception of society presupposes that there are no strangers in society, defining the basic social relation as at least friend-to-friend (compare with friendship* in Christianity).

For Confucians the proper relational ordering of society as a human macrocosm takes the family as its inspiration and starting point. Society is ordered and harmony is promoted at all levels based on *filiality*, the source of order and harmony within a family. Ritually, filiality is expressed through ancestor* veneration offered by son to father, by scholar-gentry to Confucius as ancestor par excellence, and by emperor to his ancestors and to *tian* (heaven) for the well-being of the nation. Because filiality together with its public ritual expression of ancestor veneration became the glue that held religion, culture, and society together in imperial

China, the attempts by some 17th- and 18th-c. missionaries to prohibit Chinese Roman Catholic converts from participating in ancestor veneration were viewed as attacks on filiality and on the very cohesion of Chinese culture and society, triggering the Chinese rites controversy*.

The Jesuit missionary to China, Matteo Ricci* (1552–1610), was convinced that the core teachings of Confucianism did not conflict with the Christian gospel. In an early work, *Jiaoyou lun* (On friendship), he sought to reassure the Confucian literati with his appreciation of the social significance of friendship and other foundational human relations within the Confucian Five Relations framework. His magnum opus, *Tianzhu shiyi* (True meaning of the Lord of Heaven), is grounded on the premise that the “original” Confucianism of Confucius, rather than the neo-Confucianism of Zhu Xi (Chu Hsi), enshrined an incipient monotheism and moral and ethical truth that were compatible with Christianity. History remembers two of Ricci’s Chinese students, Xu Guangqi (1562–1633) and Li Zhizao (1565–1630), together with Yang Tingyun (1557–1627) as the “three pillars of the early Chinese Church.” All three remained staunch Confucians, seeing no profound conflict between the Christian gospel and their Confucian way of life and asserting that Christianity replaced their earlier Buddhist practice (*buru yifo*). A student of Ricci, Xu Guangzi (Paul Hsu Kuang-ch’i) is best remembered for his summary of the fundamentals of Christianity in a letter he wrote in a powerful defense of Christianity, revealing a brilliant synthesis of Confucian and Christian ideas: “The service of Shangdi [the Sovereign Above] is the fundamental principle; the protection of the body and the salvation of the soul are of utmost importance; loyalty, filial piety, compassion, and love are accomplishments; the reformation of errors and the practice of virtue are initial steps; repentance and the purification [of sin] are the prerequisites for personal improvement; the true felicity of celestial life is the glorious reward of doing good; and the eternal misery of hell is the recompense of doing evil.”

Contemporary scholars and theologians have continued the dialogue between Confucianism and Christianity. For example, Yao Xinzhong and Kim Heup Young have explored the intersection of *ren* and *agape* and considered their theological ramifications, while Yeo Khiok-Khng is interested in rereading biblical texts through a Confucian–Christian hermeneutical lens. Other theologians have proposed constructive Confucian–Christian Christologies of “Jesus as the Eldest Son and Ancestor” (Peter Phan) and “Jesus as the Crucified and Risen Sage” (Jonathan Tan). John Berthrong and Robert Neville are proponents of “Boston Confucianism,” asserting that Confucianism transcends its Chinese sociocultural roots to speak to a Western audience.

JONATHAN Y. TAN

Confucianism and Christianity in Hong Kong.

These two traditions encountered each other almost immediately after the colonization of Hong Kong. Two events particularly shaped their subsequent encounters. The first was James Legge’s arrival (1843). Both a missionary and a Sinologist, he completed the first translation of the Confucian classics into English and thus introduced Confucianism to the West in a sympathetic way that also, however, aroused serious debates. The second event ties in with the neo-Confucian manifesto on the crisis in Chinese culture published in 1958, which elicited serious local Christian responses. This later event evidenced a change in the basic motive of the encounter between the two traditions from a sociopolitical one (e.g. for national salvation through theological indigenization or inculturation*), which was prominent on the mainland, to the cultural motive of the diasporic Chinese Christian communities striving to define their identity.

SIMON SHUI-MAN KWAN

Confucian Classics and the Bible. The Confucian classics and the Bible are “classical” or “canonical” (regulative) in that they embody the normative and communal wisdom of two great civilizations. Yet the