

Perhaps you wonder which god the ancient Chinese were happy to be with. Would you be surprised to learn that the original religion of China was monotheism? They worshipped the one true God. The famous sixth century B.C. philosopher Confucius researched the ancient records, and told us in *Shu Ching*, his Book of History, that the Chinese worshipped Shang Di, the Supreme God, at least as far back as 2230 B.C.

Their worship was best displayed in the Border Sacrifices of perfect sheep or bulls by the Emperor himself, who acted as high priest for the people. From the nation's beginning until the dynasties ended with the founding of the Chinese Republic in 1911, the sacrifices were performed at winter solstice - first on the southern border, then in Beijing.

How can it be that China was monotheistic all those years, when it is renowned for Taoism, Buddhism, ancestor worship, and atheism? The answer is that these religions came later and although the sacrifice ritual remained, corrupted it.

Taoism was begun by Lao-tse, who was a contemporary of Confucius. He taught that many spirits were overlooking and directing the affairs of men, and should be revered. One such was Bok Kai, the water god, who is still honored today in Marysville, California's

### *Bok Kai Parade.*

Confucius told people to worship only Shang Di, and follow the old virtues. This they did for centuries; but a few hundred years after Confucius, Emperor *Ch'in*, for whom China is named, added Taoist beliefs to the Border Sacrifice and religion. And people started believing that emperors could intercede for them even after they died. From there, the belief

expanded to include all good people, and "ancestor worship" began. Then, in 67 B.C. Buddhism came to China.

But with the Ming Dynasty, known for the purity of its blue and white porcelain, came a resurgence of pure monotheism. In 1369 A.D. scholars researched the original Border Sacrifice, and purged it from Taoist contamination. Here are some of the words which were recited by the emperor as he slaughtered and burnt the Border Sacrifice:

*O mysteriously-working Maker...I am an ant...I deeply cherish a sense of my ignorance and blindness... O that Thou wouldst...accept our offerings, and regard us, while thus we worship... Your sovereign goodness cannot be measured. As a potter, you have made all things... His unworthy servant, I bow my head, I lay it in the dust, bathed in His grace and glory.*

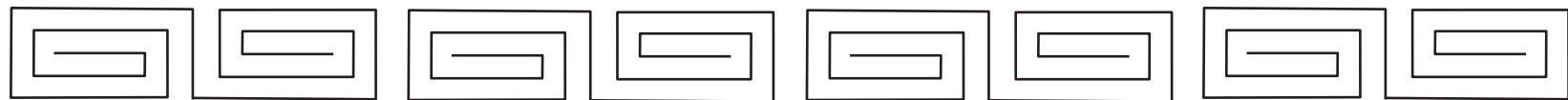
Chinese writing reflects the monotheism of the era when the characters were created. This explains why pictograms for sheep are in 71 characters, 23% of which have spiritual meaning. Sheep figure in virtues, such as truthfulness, kindness, reconciliation, righteousness, happiness, and eternity.

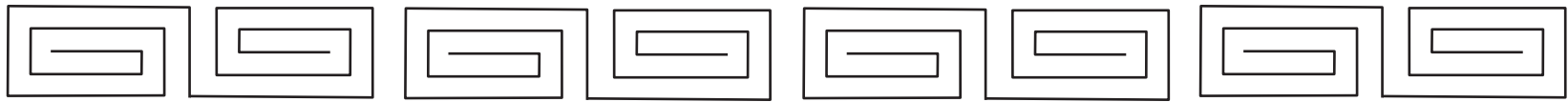
Considering the Border Sacrifice was to atone for sins, look at the pictograms in the word for *righteousness*:

羊 我 義

Lamb over Me = Righteousness

Friend, if you have heard anything of the Bible, and the religion of the Jews and the Christians, perhaps the view into the ancient history of China sounds familiar. The name Shang Di is related to El Shaddai, a Hebrew name for God. Indeed,





some researchers believe the Chinese characters, which were developed centuries before the Bible was written, reflect the earliest history of man and go back to just after the flood.

The Bible also tells us that there was a man in the Garden of Eden with God. God wanted people to see his goodness and love him for it, so he gave us the costly the gift of choice. This meant that we would at times choose wrong, and because he loves us, he would have to find a way to repair the results.

Mercy and justice are balanced in God's character. His mercy and love demand he find a way to bring us back to paradise with him. But because God is just, he can't just forgive the way we want him to: there must be a penalty. He has shown us through the ancient sacrifice system of Abraham, Moses, and the Chinese, that there must be blood – but the good news is that he accepts substitution.

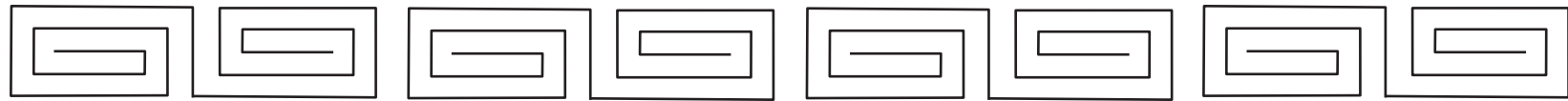
Thousands of miles away, around the time of Confucius, the Hebrew Prophet Isaiah predicted that the *Mighty God, the Everlasting Father* would be born on earth as a child. When grown, this child would be *led like a lamb to the slaughter, pierced for our transgressions, and bear the iniquity of us all.*

Why would Mighty God himself be the sacrifice for our sin? Because only he is perfect. And he is responsible for the world and everything in it. He suffered with us and for us.

*Christ died for sin once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God.* I Peter 3:18

Friend, will you join the Chinese emperors, humbly confess your sins and put yourself under the lamb? If so, pray now and ask Jesus Christ into your heart, and his Spirit to empower you to live a life of blessing to yourself and others.

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*If you would be happy for a week, kill a pig.  
If you would be happy for a year, marry.  
If you would be happy forever, plant a garden.*

Witty proverbs are a well-known feature of Chinese culture. This one reflects their love of nature.

Calligraphy, or artistic writing, is another aspect of Chinese culture, and one which often seems curious and closed to outsiders. A key to understanding Chinese writing is to know that *pictograms*, which are pictures of objects or symbols, can combine together to depict more complex thoughts in *ideograms*. For example, consider this ideogram, which means *blessing or happiness*:

It is composed of four simple symbols, and also reflects appreciation of nature:

<i>garden</i>	<i>one</i>	<i>person</i>	<i>God</i>

So we have a story that makes a word. *It is a blessing to be alone in the garden with God.* The Chinese characters were invented over four thousand years ago, yet many people still feel closest to God when they are alone in his creation.