105

Religions Ancient and Modern: Animism. by Edward Clodd; Religions of Ancient China. by Herbert A. Giles; Religion of Ancient Greece. by Jane Harrison; Pantheism. by James Allanson Picton

Review by: T. A. J.

Man, Vol. 6 (1906), pp. 171-172

Published by: [Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2787940>

Accessed: 31/12/2014 03:44

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Man*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

REVIEWS.

Religions.

Clodd, Giles, Harrison, Picton.

Religions Ancient and Modern: Animism. By Edward Clodd. Pp. 100.*Religions of Ancient China.* By Professor Herbert A. Giles, LL.D. Pp. 70.*Religion of Ancient Greece.* By Jane Harrison, LL.D. Pp. 66.*Pantheism.* By James Allanson Picton. Pp. 96.

London: Constable, 1905. 17.5 x 12 cm. Price 1s. each.

The series of small books entitled *Religions Ancient and Modern*, published by Messrs. Constable, should meet with a good reception both from the general reader and from the more serious student alike. At the present time, when the word *Anthropology* in its full sense embraces a sphere so vast that it is impossible for one individual to acquire a thorough knowledge of more than a few of its many branches, he is very largely dependent on the works of other specialists for a general survey of those departments which he has not time to study to the full himself. It is, nevertheless, almost impossible to confine oneself to the study of a single branch of anthropology to the complete exclusion of the rest; all are closely connected, and one sheds much valuable light upon another. The religion of a people is always of the greatest importance, since it is the expression of the theory formed by that people of man's position relative to the rest of the seen and unseen world, and forms the basis of a very large part of their ethnography. This being so, the value to the student of a series of this nature, of which each volume is the work of a recognised expert, is at once apparent; while, as far as the general reader is concerned, its importance is equally obvious; no one will deny the educational value of the study of religions, and the present series, which gives simply and shortly the main outlines and spirit of each, renders that study a far more easy matter.

The present notice deals with four of this series, viz., *Animism*, *The Religions of Ancient China*, *The Religion of Ancient Greece*, and *Pantheism*. Each volume is of the nature of an essay, giving a concise and lucid survey of the main characteristics of each religion, and excludes minute details. Should the reader wish to study the latter he will find the necessary literature given him in the short bibliographies appended to each book.

The subject of *Animism* has been entrusted to Mr. Clodd, and it is quite safe in his hands. He takes the line indicated by Hobbes, that "The feare of things invisible is the natural Seed of Religion," and finds the germ of primitive animism already present in the lower animals. He argues that "The doctrine of Evolution has no 'favoured nation' clause for man. It admits no break in the psychical chain which links him to the lowest life forms, be these plant or animal. It finds no arrest of continuity between the bark of the dog and the orations of Demosthenes, or between the pulsations of an amoeba and the ecstasies of a saint." He traces the progress of animism from the stage where things are regarded as living, "because of their own proper powers, or because they are self-power," to the stage where the existence of an indwelling spirit, apart from the body, is believed, a doctrine which is probably derived from dreams. Worship of the powers of nature follows as a matter of course, and the importance of animism as, at least, an element in all religions is enforced. As regards the last point the author very truly remarks, "In structure and inherited tendencies each of us is hundreds of years old, but the civilised part of us is recent." A peculiar feature of this excellent little book is the implicit tribute it bears to Professor Tylor; it shows in a very striking manner how little, even yet, can be added to his great work on *Primitive Culture*.

For *The Religions of Ancient China* we are indebted to Professor Giles, who has succeeded in compressing a very great deal of information into the short space

at his disposal. Here the earliest-known form of religion was a simple monotheism, with a belief in rewards for the good and punishment for the wicked in this life, but without any idea of a devil or a hell. Spirits, however, were recognised, and gradually other minor deities were called into existence. Ancestor worship had been practised from the earliest ages, and soon assumed great importance. With Confucius came a change, "The sage's attitude of mind towards religion was one of a benevolent agnosticism, as summed up in his famous utterance, *Respect the spirits, but keep them at a distance.*" At the same time he recognised their existence, and did not refuse to take part in sacrifices. Further modifications were introduced by Lao Tzū, who "harped upon a doctrine of inaction, by virtue of which all things were to be accomplished." The Materialists are also discussed, and the book concludes with a short sketch of Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism in China.

Miss Harrison deals with *The Religion of Ancient Greece*, and makes a distinct point in complaining that "Three disabilities, then, have atrophied and well-nigh paralyzed the study of Greek religion. First, instead of studying religion as a whole we have studied only one part, Mythology. Second, even Mythology was not studied rationally as a whole, but in scraps to explain 'allusions.' Third, such Mythology as was studied was seen distorted through the medium of Alexandrian and Roman literature." Furthermore, the author recognises to the full the enormous part the poets played in forming the national pantheon, for the latter was more a literary creation than anything else.

From a belief in undifferentiated "gods" in prehistoric times, together with hero-worship and the blood-curse, the change is traced to the immigrant "Olympian" pantheon, to which were admitted, nevertheless, the older deities, Hera, Poseidon, Aphrodite, etc." "Zeus, the sky god, with all the heavy fatherhood of Wuotan, is a northerner, though very early he blended with the local mountain oak and thunder gods of the Pelasgian population. Hera is indigenous, Pelasgian; originally she had no connection with Zeus." The distinction between the newer and older gods and their respective rituals is well traced, and also the re-emergence of the older religion in the seventh and sixth centuries. The oriental influences in Greek religion are also distinguished, and a very good account is given of the "mysteries," Dionysiac and Orphic.

The remaining volume on *Pantheism*, by J. Allanson Picton, in some ways possesses the greatest "living" interest of the four, in so far as Pantheism is, in its true form, the most modern product of human psychology, and that, too, in Europe, where we boast is the seat of the highest form of civilisation. Pantheism bears a remarkable relation to religious evolution, it stands at the top of the scale of which the lowest note is animism, but it is implicit even there. Many religions at various periods have exhibited tendencies towards a modified form of Pantheism, but the first expression of the doctrine in its entirety came from Spinoza.

Its distinguishing characteristic is that it is "comparatively free from any limits of period, climate, or race. For while what we roughly call Egyptian religion, the Vedic religion, the Greek religion, Buddhism, and others of temporary fame have been necessarily local and temporary, Pantheism has been for the most part a dimly-discerned background, an esoteric significance of many or all religions, rather than a 'denomination' by itself." The author is very much to be congratulated on this capital little work, which is certainly one of the best in the series.

Finally, a word of thanks should be offered to the publishers for their enterprise in issuing so useful and well-arranged a series of books.

T. A. J.