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[bodyoffaith.blogspot.com](http://bodyoffaith.blogspot.com)



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# 1. 2015

## 1.1 October

### Tattooed Mummies (2015-10-28 17:19)



In honor of Halloween being upon us, I figured I'd start my first post with the origins of tattoos and how they were discovered in the early people of the world. These people were, interestingly enough, the Egyptian mummies. There are many interesting and intriguing things I've learned about Egypt and the people who lived there over my years as a college student. What I didn't know from all my years of Ancient World History and Anthropology was that Egypt was also one of the first places where we see the emergence of permanent body art. After reading an article by Cate Lineberry of the Smithsonian, I learned that the first tattoos were dated back to about 5000 BC. They were originally only found on women, and appeared to be seen as amulets of protection over pregnancy and childbirth. As we moved throughout the region, and into Greece and Rome, tattoos began to appear on people of all sorts. Now, men and women alike share a love of body art, piercings, and other body modifications.

The dawn of Christianity in early Rome around 350 AD spawned the first banning of tattoos by the emperor Constantine of Rome. Constantine was the one who decided to take Christianity from a persecuted clan of backwards believers into the "official" religion of the empire. Since Christians were now seeing themselves as created in the image and likeness of God, and that was a good thing, it was blasphemous to defile this image. It would be quite a while before tattoos depicting religious scenes and/or symbols became an accepted form of veneration for some faiths, but it is still frowned upon today in many religions, and even still banned in others.

Site referenced:

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/tattoos-144038580/?page=1>

## 1.2 November

### There is no "right" answer (2015-11-18 12:34)

So after some time researching the over arching question that lingers in the minds of many; "are tattoos allowed in religion?" and if the answer to that is no, "why?", but if the answer is yes, "which ones, and what kind?". In Christianity, for one, scripture from the Bible (Leviticus 19:28) is referenced as a reason why Christians should not tattoo or modify their bodies, but as the times have moved on, the churches have become more accepting.

I would challenge anyone who considers themselves to be religious in any way to do a little research on the beliefs of your faith before considering body art. Here's why:

- Out of all religions, the top three - Christianity, Judaism, and Islam - all have strict rules or sometimes harsh beliefs on tattoos and body modifications. It would be wise to know what criticism or outcast you may face upon entering your place of worship after getting inked or pierced.
- Judaism in particular bans tattoos as part of their belief system. If you are Jewish, make sure you are aware of that, and ready to face the consequences of going against this rule.
- Having tattoos or body modifications, while they may not be strictly banned like in Judaism, could have negative effects on the way you are perceived or treated, not only in your place of worship, but also in society as a whole.
- Make sure you are sure of the religious implications of your tattoo choice, and that you haven't chosen a symbol or verse that could be misinterpreted or offensive. Some words, phrases, symbols, or pictures may not be meant to be displayed on the human body.
- Consider tattoo placement of religious symbolism. Perhaps a tattoo of a cross is better served on the arm than the butt cheek.
- Consider your reasons for wanting a religious tattoo. If you are unsure of how your faith sees body art, have some reasoning as to why you chose to get it. Are you attempting evangelization by displaying the gospel message of Christ? Are you honoring the teachings of Buddha through a daily, physical reminder of his words? Is your body art meant to be a tribute to your family's struggle with persecution through the Holocaust?
- What is the cost? Both Islam and Christianity have tied to them a monetary obligation to give to the church and the poor. Are you using your wealth wisely, or are you using the money you should be giving back to pay for expensive body art?

Although this is a long list of things to consider, there are, I'm sure, many other things one might want to think about with regard to a choice to tattoo yourself with images and symbols of your faith. Here are a few examples of religious tattoos gone wrong. Spelling matters:













I would also like to pay tribute to the tattoo artists and tattooed men and women who have made the effort to get it right. Check out some of these amazing works of art:











Here are some of the websites I used when thinking about this post, click the link to go directly to each article if you'd like to read further:

<http://www.spiritualbridge.org>

<http://www.patheos.com>

<http://biblehub.com>

And here are the websites from where my images were copied:

<http://www.ranker.com>

<http://www.buzzfeed.com>

<http://www.inkedmag.com>

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## 1.3 December

### Is it "religious" enough? (2015-12-02 21:29)

I've talked at length about tattoos, which are something I'm pretty passionate about. I decided to take a look at some other body modifications as related to religion, and after looking around to find some good information, I was astonished to see that there is actually a religion of its own dedicated to body modification! I don't know why I was so shocked by this, but here's a little more information on this church:

Aptly named the *Church of Body Modification*, this real, recognized religion is attended by people around the country, and even the world. Taken directly from the Church's website, [uscobm.com](http://uscobm.com), their mission statement is "The Church's mission is to educate, inspire, and to help lead our members along a path of spiritual body modification. As members of the Church of Body Modification, we aim to practice our body modification rituals with purpose, to unify our mind, body, and soul, and to connect with our higher power." If you have the time, browse the FAQ's and references on the website as well, there is a great deal of information there on body modification, piercing, tattoos, etc from a spiritual perspective, as well as answers to some really honest questions about the faith. One in particular, that I wondered myself, was if the Church believed in God? The answer was, "To answer simply, yes. However, the full answer goes much deeper. Though some members will use the term "God", many members prefer other terms such as: "Universal Truth", "the Almighty", "Goddess", "Divine Being", and others." This tells me that this is probably a monotheist ideology with different personal interpretations of the "god" that manifest him/her self.

Now, on to my initial question, is it religious enough? I got this question from an article I found after looking into the Church of Body Modification. The article was about a girl who was suspended from high school for a nose piercing, which was against dress code, even though she claimed it was a religious exemption and should be within her First Amendment rights. As many of us are aware, the First Amendment protects those of us in school or the workplace from discrimination or negative consequences if we participate in any observance of our religious beliefs. For example, I am Catholic and as par too my religious practice, I don't work on Good Friday (the Friday before Easter Sunday). That is my right, and there would be legal ramifications if my place of employment tried to tell me I would lose my job for observing my religious practice of complete prayer and fasting on this holy day. In the same sense, items of clothing like a hijab or turban are allowable, even if your school or workplace forbids hats or headgear of any kind. But back to our teen and her nose ring. In this situation in North Carolina, the school suspended Ariana Iacono for a lengthy amount of time, because of her nose piercing. Iacono and her mother were current and participating members of the Church of Body Modification, but because it was a small and relatively new religious entity, it was dismissed as not a "real" religion. This brought about questions regarding what level of belief and practice is involved in showing that your belief is "real" enough, and turned into a court battle between the School District and the Iaconos, the local ACLU chapter, and the President and Ministers of the Church of Body Modification.





According to this article on Fox ( <http://www.foxnews.com> ) , the case was settled and Ariana was allowed back into school, nose ring and all, and the District was rewording its dress code verbiage to account for the changes in times, and changes in terminology.

I guess this story, among many others, shows that religion, no matter how big or small, no matter how weird or strange, is open to the the interpretation of the believer, not the outsider. Every religion was once "weird" or small to someone else, and many of these faiths come with practices we fail to always understand and embrace. That doesn't make them wrong, or invalid, or unworthy of recognition. It is up to the believer to stand up for themselves, their practices, and their beliefs.

Websites cited (link in text): <http://uscobm.com>

<http://www.foxnews.com>

Image from:

<http://www.foxnews.com>

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*gads*

BlogBook v0.8,  
L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X 2<sub>ε</sub> & GNU/Linux.  
<http://www.blogbooker.com>

Edited: December 5, 2015

