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Contents

1	2015	5
1.1	October	5
	About (2015-10-04 00:14)	5
1.2	November	5
	Jewls of Christianity (2015-11-09 04:04)	5
1.3	December	6
	Buddhist Art (2015-12-04 17:44)	6
	Judaism Against Body Art (2015-12-04 19:32)	6
	Religious Posers (2015-12-04 20:45)	7
	Hindu Art Traditions (2015-12-04 23:23)	7
	Express Yourself (2015-12-04 23:36)	7

1. 2015

1.1 October

About (2015-10-04 00:14)

This is an academic blog covering the ways people of different religions express their beliefs and traditions. Art, jewelry, body alterations, and forms of symbolism are present in one way or another in every religion around the world. This blog is taking a deeper look at how each of these elements works to help people express themselves and their beliefs, along with the rules or restrictions religions might carry about each the forms of expression.

1.2 November

Jewels of Christianity (2015-11-09 04:04)

I've noticed that many Catholics and Christians use symbols from their religions as jewelry, such as crosses. In my family, each child got a diamond cross necklace at our baptism from either our god mother or our father. I don't know whether this is a tradition in every family, but it does show how much meaning the cross has to members of the Christian /Catholic religions. As many of you might know, in these religions the savior, Jesus, was nailed to a cross where he died. So the question I have is: why are these symbols worn? For protection or to show your faith? Or maybe the cross is worn for a different personal reason. In my opinion, the reason for this representation is different for every person. To decipher the real reason, I decided to ask the people around me and learned that I was right. Some people, like my mother, think that wearing a cross is a way to show not only others, but god their faith in him and their religion. My aunt, on the other hand, wears a cross to remind herself of her religion. If she is having a hard day or is upset, seeing the cross reminds her of her beliefs in god and the values the religion has taught her. As for others, a cross is more of a fashion statement than a religious emblem. My sister happens to be one of these people, wearing a cross daily as an accessory. I don't think that any of these are incorrect reasons to wear a cross, considering every person has different reasons for believing in a religion. Religion means something unique to every individual and that is why it is so special.

1.3 December

Buddhist Art (2015-12-04 17:44)

Buddhism is a religion I've personally always been very interested in. In Buddhism, the Buddha is someone who has reached enlightenment and entered Nirvana. As you may have seen, a lot of art is created around the Buddha from tapestries and statues to tattoos and jewelry. Even people who do not consider themselves "Buddhist", per say, possess these art forms. My roommate, for example, is Jewish. She attends temple regularly, celebrates holidays with her family, and believes in the Jewish religion. Although she is Jewish and follows Jewish traditions, she has a tattoo of Buddha on her back and a tapestry hanging on her wall. She says that she has this tattoo because of the beliefs and lifestyles of Buddhists and their ways of looking at the world. The tattoo reminds her of the outlook she should have on life and the energy she should carry. I think this shows that religions normally do not have huge barriers separating them from one another. Unless you follow your religion to the extreme, such as orthodox Judaism, most people do observe some aspects of other religions besides their own. I think this is very common with Buddhism because it is not necessarily believing in another god, it is simply believing in a way of being and living. Buddhism is all about ending suffering and enlightenment which is why it is so attractive to so many people. This explains why both Buddhists and non-Buddhists have this art both around their home and on their bodies. It is a reminder of balance, a way to remain on a good path.

Judaism Against Body Art (2015-12-04 19:32)

Everyone today has a different view or opinion on body art such as tattoos and piercings. Some people think the decision of body modification should be up to the individual getting this art done, however, some people think it should be banned all together. The views on this tend to normally be very religious based. Many Christians, for example my grandmother, think that god made you perfectly and altering your body is disrespecting god's "masterpiece". Judaism, on the other hand, has some different reasons for being opposed to body art. One reason I found out by asking a Jewish friend was that in the holocaust Jews were branded. Today, they see tattoos as a reminder of this branding and therefore are completely against the idea. Another reason people of the Jewish religion are against body art is because it is said in the bible that tattoos are prohibited. In Leviticus 19:28, it says "You shall not etch a tattoo on yourselves." Many people take this very seriously and are against any type of body modification, tattoos, piercing, and so on. I also found it interesting that if a Jewish person is tattooed, they are no longer allowed to be buried in a Jewish cemetery. This shows how serious body art and modification is taken in Judaism. This does not mean that all Jews respect this rule, many still proceed to get tattoos and other modifications. In my opinion, body art is not a big deal and I think it should be up to the individual, however, this definitely shows how seriously some people take and respect their religions.

Religious Posers (2015-12-04 20:45)

We've all seen them, teenage girls with crosses tattooed on their sides, hamsa necklaces, or Buddha posters. But do these people really actively support and believe in the religions they represent with this art? Or is this art just a fashion statement or a way to get attention? Many religions have artwork that are trending, such as the hamsa, so it's now hard to tell who actually believes in these religions and who are just using its iconic symbols as a statement. With technology today, websites like tumblr, Facebook, twitter, and Instagram all allow people to post pictures and ideas encompassing this art. I think this is mostly the cause for these non religious people wearing the art of a specific religion. People today also do not grow up surrounded by their religion like it used to be. With no strict guide lines or religious beliefs of their own, young adults are simply representing whatever religion is cool at the time. I am not saying this is every teenager or young adult, however, a large portion of our society is obsessed with what is trending and hot at the time. This, unfortunately, now includes religion as well, besides music and clothes like trends used to be. I think that the problem with this is that these people have no beliefs of their own. They have no "higher power" to answer to, like most religions do, because they don't truthfully believe in anything specific. This art has come dis-affiliated with the religion it originated from and I think this is very sad. Years from now, I'm not sure if religion will be the same important structure in people's lives as it was when I was growing up.

Hindu Art Traditions (2015-12-04 23:23)

The Hindu religion is extremely interesting because of their involvement with arts. From symbols and paintings to dances and festivals, art is an essential part of Hindu tradition. Dances are used in worship and festivals are held as rituals for commemorating goddesses and so on. Holi, for example, is a huge festival thrown in North India in either March or April. Bright colored paint is thrown during this festival, representing the colors of spring and fires are lit to destroy evil. The reason I think these arts and festivals are so interesting is because it is a very active way to participate in worship, instead of sitting in a church or temple listening to someone speak for an hour. I wish I had interactive things like this to get me more interested in religion when I was a child. One of the biggest problems with religion today is finding something that sparks your interest so with Hinduism it is very easy to stay interested and want to be a part of the religion. Dance is also a huge part of Hindu tradition. Dance is thought to be similar to yoga and can help liberate you. There are many devotional dances that Hindu people performs like the Bharata Natyam. This dance symbolizes a humans wanting of union with the Lord. The way that dance can make this union is amazing and so much stronger, in my opinion, than a simple prayer. Dance is intricate, passionate, and beautiful, just like religion is.

Express Yourself (2015-12-04 23:36)

Every religion has a way of expression through art. Dance, paintings, jewelry, tapestries, and so on are all art that religions encompass. These arts play a major role in worship and bringing people of every religion together. Art can

also attract non religious people to explore religion and find out exactly what its about. Personally, I never believed in religion until I was exposed to these arts. They make you want to learn more and understand why and how other religions work. They can teach you so much about any individual religion and open your mind to possibilities you didn't understand prior. It is a way for any given religion to express is values and faith in a way that everyone can understand and participate in. This is why art is so valuable, it can bridge gaps between many different people with little in common much like religion does. Even if you don't believe in a religion, art gives you an inside look at what other people around you believe in and why they hold some of the things they do so important. I think both religion and art are very important in our society, especially today. With all of the hate and confusion going on around the world, religion and art serve as safe havens that bring people together and make them feel protected. They create understanding, compassion and unity between different groups of people and unite them for a like cause. Without religion, the world today would be a much different place.

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