

Chapter Nine

UNDERSTANDING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND WORK

Chapter Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- understand various beliefs of the largest U.S. religions.
- know the practices of other religions that exist in the U.S.
- describe religious accommodation.
- identify various components of religions that may require accommodation in the workplace.
- respect religious difference.



The world's three largest religions in order by size are: Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. We will discuss these groups as well as a few others to get a better understanding of the commonly practiced religions in U.S. society.

Christianity

Christians in America

Christians follow the teachings of Jesus Christ and his apostles.¹ Jesus is the Greek name for Yeshua where Yeshua has a Hebrew meaning of salvation from despair, depression, hate, feeling empty inside, and death--you will never be alone again, but happy and fulfilled.² Yeshua of Nazareth was the name that was given to Jesus Christ when he was a child. The second part of his name, Christ is Greek and it means "the Messiah" or the "anointed one."³

Yeshua was a Jewish itinerant preacher who was born circa 4 to 7 BCE where BCE means "before the common era" (= Christian "BC" notation).⁴ He was executed by the Roman occupying authorities in Palestine, perhaps on Friday, 30-APR-7 CE (i.e. in the spring of the year 30) where CE means "of the common era" (= Christian "AD" notation).⁵ Most Christians regard him as the Son of God. They further believe that he is God, the second person in the Trinity (the Trinity consists of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; three separate persons, all eternal, all omnipresent, who form a single, unified deity).

Most Christians believe that Jesus co-existed with God before the creation of the world, was born of a virgin, was resurrected three days after his death, and later ascended to Heaven. They believe in one God, prayer, in paying tithes and/or giving to the poor. Some believe in fasting as a ritual or for spiritual cleansing. They also attend services in a church (their holy place) on Saturday; Sunday and various other days of the week depending on the Christian denomination.

Christians have a holy book often referred to as the Bible. However, there are many versions of the Bible (over 50 in English alone). The most common difference is that some leave out entire verses or books, others disagree on whether Jesus should be called God's servant or God's Son.⁶ Two of the more common English versions are the King James Version and the new International Version.

Of the common versions, the books of the Bible are divided into two parts: the 46 Books of the Old Testament primarily sourced from the Tanakh (with some variations), and the 27 Books of the New Testament containing books originally written primarily in Greek.⁷ Some versions of the Christian Bible have a separate section for the books not considered by the publisher as canonical (of Canon law which is an internal ecclesiastical law governing the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox churches, and the Anglican Communion of churches).

Christian Holidays

A celebrated holiday of many Christians is Christmas. Christmas is a holiday that celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ. It has been a federal U.S. holiday since June 26, 1870 which means school systems and many workplaces in the U.S. celebrate this day as an official holiday. According to the History of Christmas, it indicates that:

"In the early 17th century, a wave of religious reform changed the way Christmas was celebrated in Europe. When Oliver Cromwell and his Puritan forces took over England in 1645, they vowed to rid England of decadence and, as part of their effort, cancelled Christmas. By popular demand, Charles II was restored to the throne and, with him, came the return of the popular holiday. The pilgrims, English separatists that came to America in 1620, were even more orthodox in their Puritan beliefs than Cromwell. As a result, Christmas was not a holiday in early America. From 1659 to 1681, the celebration of Christmas was actually outlawed in Boston. Anyone exhibiting the Christmas spirit was fined five shillings. By contrast, in the Jamestown settlement, Captain John Smith reported that Christmas was enjoyed by all and passed without incident."⁸

Christmas is celebrated in many manners in the U.S. From trees being purchased and decorated, homes being lit with lights, big family dinners with Turkey to gifts that can be opened on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day brought to kids by Santa Claus.

While many Christians celebrate Christmas in the above manner, some Christians believe that Christians should not observe Christmas at all.⁹ Some object to the commercialism of the holiday; others object to its origins. But those that celebrate this holiday celebrate Jesus' birth on December 25th. Some also celebrate Jesus' resurrection (when Jesus' comes back from the dead to save all sinners) in April and call this Easter. Easter, however, is not a federal holiday.

Church History

'The followers of Yeshua formed the Jewish Christian movement, centered in Jerusalem, after his death. They regarded themselves as a reform movement within Judaism; they continued to sacrifice at the temple, circumcise their male children, follow Jewish kosher food laws, etc. Saul of Tarsus, originally a persecutor of the Jewish Christians, reported having a vision of the risen Christ. Adopting the new name of Paul, he became the greatest theologian of the early Christian movement. His writings, along with those of the author(s) of the Gospel of John, provided much of the theological foundation for Christianity, as we know it according to Christian history.¹⁰

This Christian religion was documented as a legitimate religion in 313 CE and the authority of the church converged among the five bishops or patriarchs located in Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, Jerusalem and Rome.¹¹ However, because Islam's religious power was spreading throughout the Middle East in the 7th century the power of the Christian base changed to Constantinople and Rome.¹² These two Christian centers gradually grew apart in belief, and practice. In 1054 CE, a split was formalized between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches; it remains in effect today.

The splitting of the Christian religion did not stop there as in the 16th century the Protestant group was split within the western church which later split into thousands of individual denominations and groups of denominations.¹³

Current Status of Christianity

About 33% of the world's population regard themselves as Christian with Catholics being the largest group with at least 1.1 billion adherents.¹⁵ This number has been dropping very slowly in recent years, mainly due to¹⁶:

- An increase in non-theists, such as Agnostics, Atheists, Humanists, etc.
- An increase in the numbers of followers of minority religions, largely caused by immigration.
- The emergence of new spiritual/religious movements like New Age, Wicca and other Neopagan religions.

However, there are over 1,000 Christian groups in North America alone; each has their own set of beliefs, policies and practices. Like individual politicians, Christians can be classified as conservative, mainline and liberal. Within each faith group there can also exist a wide range of opinions where individual members may hold a wide range of religious beliefs.

Christian denominations include but are not limited to: Orthodox/Eastern Christian, Conservative Protestant, Liberal Protestant, African Indigenous Sects, Pentecostal, Anglican, Assemblies of God, Jehovah's Witness, Latter Day Saints, New Thought--Unity, Christian Science, Friends (Quakers). Of these groups, many within each group tend to view the Christian world in terms of "us". e.g. "there is my denomination, and then there are all the other faith groups that consider themselves to be Christian."¹⁷ This could cause one denomination (a conservative Christian group) to believe they are the "true" faith and therefore denounce the validity of another Christian group that may be more liberal in their approach to Christianity.

Some of the differences among the three categories of Christianity are:

- Fundamentalists and other Evangelical Christians believe in order for someone to be a "real" Christian they must be saved. You must profess your belief in Jesus and live according to the principles of the Bible.¹⁸
- Mainline Christians are more wide-ranging in who they accept as Christian. If you believe in the teachings of Jesus Christ whether saved or not, then you are a Christian.¹⁹
- Liberal Christians are even more open to who is a Christian and they often have no set doctrine or set of beliefs that must be followed. However, this does not preclude them from having common beliefs with conservative or mainline Christians. They are liberal in the sense that they often interpret the scripture without any preconceived notions but use it to apply to life today.²⁰

The most common method of arranging Christian denominations is from the most

conservative to the most liberal. Unfortunately, not everyone agrees on the specific order. In 1979, author D.R. Hodge created a list that sorts Christian denominations from the most conservative to the most liberal according to the doctrine of the denominations at the time, the list is as follows²¹:

- Assemblies of God (the most conservative)
- Seventh-Day Adventist
- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)
- Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod
- Church of the Nazarene
- Southern Baptist Convention
- Churches of Christ
- Presbyterian Church in the United States
- American Baptist Churches in the USA
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America
- United Methodist Church
- Episcopal Church
- United Church of Christ (the most liberal)

A Prime Belief: Life After Death

Christian beliefs about one's destination after death vary greatly. Many conservative Protestant Christians believe that people are born and remain sinful; they will end up being eternally punished in Hell unless they are "saved" by trusting Jesus as Lord and Savior. Roman Catholics believe that salvation comes from God, and is channeled through church sacraments to sinful, repentant persons. Most people, at death, go to Purgatory, which is type of temporary Hell; a few go directly to Heaven; others go permanently to Hell. Religious liberals, on the other hand, generally interpret Hell symbolically, not as an actual place. They reject the concept of a loving God creating a place of eternal torment.

Islam

An Introduction to Islam

The second most popular religion is Islam. It is growing and is expected to become the dominant religion of the world during this century.²² The word "Islam" in Arabic language means "submission" & "peace."²³ Religious followers of Islam are referred to as Muslims. A Muslim is a person who submits to the will of Allah (which

is the name for God in Arabic language) and finds therein peace.²⁴ The *Masjid* (Mosque) is the Muslims place of worship and found all around the world.

Islam is derived from the Arabic word "salaam" meaning peace. Islam originated with the teachings of Muhammad in the 7th century. Muslims believe Muhammad is the final of all religious prophets (beginning with Abraham) and that the Qu'ran, which is the Islamic scripture, was revealed to him by God.²⁵

Who are the Muslims?

There are two major sects of Muslims throughout the world--Sunni and Shiite where about 92% of world's Muslims are Sunni and another 6% are Shiite leaving a very small percentage amongst the following groups: Sufi, Wahhabi, Maliki, Deobandi, the U.S.-based Nation of Islam (previously known as "Black Muslims"), and Ahmadiyya.²⁶ Shiites are found in Iran and Azerbaijan where they make up over 70% of each country's population. Shiites are also the majority in Iraq and are the second largest group in Lebanon. They also have a minority of followers in Yemen, Pakistan and Turkey.

Sunnis on the other hand are the majority in all other Muslim countries and they represent the majority of Muslims in non-Muslim countries like China and the continent of Africa. One of the major differences between the two sects (Sunnis and Shiites) is their definition or interpretation of the Sunnah and the Hadith.²⁸ The Hadith is the recorded practice and teachings of Prophet Mohammad which were early regarded as his Sunnah, meaning 'path' or 'way.'²⁹ These traditions became powerful symbols for the Islamic religion, models of right belief and practice.

World's Major Branches of Islam

Taken From the CIA World Fact Book on Religion²⁷

Islam claims about 22.5% of the World's Population

| Branch | Number of Adherents |
|-----------|---------------------|
| Sunni | 1,140,000,000 |
| Shiite | 220,000,000 |
| Ahmadiyya | 10,000,000 |
| Druze | 450,000 |

It is estimated that there are over 1.5 billion Muslims around the world.³⁰ There is almost no country on earth without some groups of Muslims, and in such countries as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia or Turkey, the populations are almost wholly Muslim. Islam is also perhaps the fastest growing religion on the North American continent.³¹ Most people however equate the term Muslims with Arabs. While many Arabs are Muslims, not all Muslims are Arabs. This confusion may come because its scriptures or holy book, the Holy Qur'an, must be recited in original Arabic form.

Muslims represent many races and socioeconomic classes. Due to the popularity of the Islamic faith in the United States some cities are rethinking the religious holidays that they offer as days off. For instance, the western Detroit suburb of Dearborn, Michigan has been a magnet for immigrants from the Middle East for decades and has one of the nation's largest concentrations of Arabs as they makeup one third of the population.³²

This city also serves as a cultural and religious center for an estimated 300,000 members of the Arab-American community in southeastern Michigan.³³ The two major holidays that these cities with a large Arab-American population is considering as celebrated city holidays are Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of the month long fast of Ramadan. The other holiday is Eid al-Adha, which marks the annual completion of the pilgrimage to Mecca. The dates of these holidays change every year because they are determined by a lunar calendar.

Key Islamic Concepts*

In order to understand Islam, it is necessary to know the meaning of certain key terms and the identity of some proper names. Most of them are in the Arabic language, and there is often no equivalent in English or in other tongues.

*The concepts below are copied with permission from the website: Islam Answering found at http://www.islamanswering.com/subpage.php?s=cat_open&cid=46³⁴

Allah

The true name for the creator of the Universe is called Allah.³⁴ He is merciful, the Beneficent, the Knowledgeable, the Protector, the Mighty, the God, the Provider, the Exalted, the Lord, the All-Knowing, the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing, the Magnificent, the Wise, the Loving, the First, the Last, and the Eternal. The Qur'an (the Muslims holy book) mentions 99 beautiful names for Allah through which Muslims do recognize Him, and His responsibilities for the whole Universe.³⁵

Many people ask why the term "Allah" is used instead of "God" and assume its use implies that Muslims worship a separate God. There is only ONE GOD - a belief held by followers of each of the three main world religions: Islam, Christianity and Judaism.

Allah is the Supreme Being, the one and only God. Allah is the same God as is worshipped by the Jews and Christians, and Arabic-speaking Christians also use this name when referring to God.

Ayah

The Arabic meaning of Ayah is a miracle and a sign. The Qur'an is considered to be a miracle itself. Each verse or sentence is called an Ayah or a miracle. The plural of Ayah is called Ayat, which means miracles.

Azan

The call for the daily prayers are called Azan. The person who calls the Azan is called a Mu'azzin. A Mu'azzin calls the Azan five times a day before Muslims so as to perform their daily Salah (Prayer).

Birth

Muslims believe that people are born free of sin. It is only after they reach the age of puberty and it is only after they commit sins that they are to be charged for their mistakes. No one is responsible for or can take the responsibility for the sins of others. However, the door of forgiveness through true repentance is always open.

Festivities

Other than the two general feasts, there are few festivities that Muslims do enjoy. These are related to different activities or functions. Some of these activities are:

Aqiqah: It is a dinner reception to be made after a child is born. Relatives, friends, and neighbors are invited for such an occasion.

Walimah: It is a dinner reception to be made after a marriage is consummated. It is offered by the parents and/or by the married couple. Friends, relatives, and neighbors are also invited.

Islam

Islam is an Arabic word the root of which is Silm and Salam. It means among others: peace, greeting, salutation, obedience, loyalty, allegiance, and submission to the will of the Creator of the Universe. It is asserted by many that Islam is the last and final religion to all mankind and to all generations irrespective of color, race, nationality, ethnic background, language, or social position. It is incorrect and objectionable to call Muslims Muhammadans, as Muhammad is not worshipped in the way Christians worship Christ.

Jihad

It is an Arabic word the root of which is Jahada, which means to strive for a better way of life. The nouns are Juhd, Mujahid, Jihad, and Ijtihad. The other meanings are: endeavor, strain, exertion, effort, diligence, fighting to defend one's life, land, and religion. This word has been in frequent use in the Western press over the past several years, explained to mean a holy war. As a matter of fact the term "holy war" was coined in Europe during the Crusades, meaning the war against Muslims.

Jihad is not a war to force the faith on others, as many people think of it. It should never be interpreted as a way of compulsion of the belief on others, since there is an explicit verse in the Qur'an that says: "There is no compulsion in religion" Al-Qur'an: Al-Baqarah (2:256). Jihad is not a defensive war only, but a war against any unjust regime. If such a regime exists, a war is to be waged against the leaders, but not against the people of that country. People should be freed from the unjust regimes and influences so that they can freely choose to believe in Allah. Not only in peace but also in war Islam prohibits terrorism, kidnapping, and hijacking, when carried against civilians. Whoever commits such violations is considered a murderer in Islam, and is to be punished by the Islamic state. During wars, Islam prohibits Muslim soldiers from harming civilians, women, children, elderly, and the religious men like priests and rabbies. It also prohibits cutting down trees and destroying civilian constructions. The term may be used for/by Muslims as well as non-Muslims.

Muhammad (s.a.w.)

The last and the final prophet and messenger of Allah to all mankind is called Muhammad (s.a.w.) and at the age of forty he received the message of Islam from Allah through angel Gabriel (Jibril). He was the last of a line of prophets like Nuh (Noah), Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), and Isa (Jesus).

Muslim(s)

Also spelled Moslem is based on the same Arabic root as Islam (s-l-m) and means one who submits to God, that is, a believer in Islam. Any person who believes in the creed and the teachings of Islam is called a Muslim. More than one billion Muslims are found in different parts of the world. They are not to be confused with Arabs, as Arabs may include Christians, agnostics, or other non-Muslims.

Some Commonly Asked Questions about Muslims

Question: How do Muslims view death?

Muslims like Jews and Christians believe that there is life after death, believing that this life prepares us for this life after death. Basic articles of faith include: the Day of Judgment, resurrection, Heaven and Hell.³⁵ When a Muslim dies, the burial occurs very quickly if at all possible the same day. The body is prepared by being

washed, usually by a family member, wrapped in a clean white cloth, and buried with a simple prayer.³⁶

Question: Do Christianity and Islam have different origins?

"No. Together with Judaism, they go back to the patriarch Abraham, and their three prophets are directly descended from his sons Muhammad from the eldest, Ishmael, and Moses and Jesus from Isaac. Abraham established the settlement which today is the city of Makkah (Mecca), and built the Ka'abah towards which all Muslims turn when they pray. In fact, Christians and Jews are thus afforded a special, protected place in Islamic tradition and are known as "People of the Book."³⁷

Question: Islam is a monolithic religion that does not allow debate or discussion on matters of faith. True or False?

False. There is more than one sect of Muslims due to different interpretations of Islamic law and unlike Catholicism there is no final doctrinal authority or pastor/clergy.³⁸

What are some Muslim Customs?

- **SALAT (Prayer):** "Performing daily prayers is an act of communication between humans and God. Five daily prayers are considered a duty for all Muslims, and on these occasions preparations in ritual purity are required. The prayers must be said while facing in the direction of Mecca. The congregational prayer of Friday afternoon is compulsory and must be said in the Mosque, Muslim's place of worship. There is a sermon and then the prayers are said in uniform rows."³⁹
- **ZAKAT (Alms):** Before the month of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar Muslims are required to give 2.5% of wealth and assets to those who are less fortunate.⁴⁰ This is a yearly obligation. Giving the Zakat is considered an act of worship because it is a form of giving thanks to God for the means of material well-being one has acquired.⁴¹
- **SAWM OR SIYAM (Fasting):** Another form of offering thanks to God is fasting. It is required of all Muslims to fast during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, Ramadan. During this month, Muslims refrain from food and drink during daylight however this does not apply to all Muslims as exceptions

are made to those who are elderly, ill, insane, pregnant and nursing women, and travelers.⁴² But, they are to make up for this lost time at a later date. Many children complete the fast but is not absolutely required.⁴³

More about Ramadan

Ramadan is a very important celebration of the Islamic faith. The Month of Ramadan is when it is believed the Holy Qur'an "was sent down from heaven, guidance unto men, a declaration of direction, and a means of Salvation."⁴⁴

This fast is an opportunity for Muslims to focus more on their faith and worship rather than the daily issues of life. During this month of fasting, Muslims do not eat or drink anything from true dawn until sunset.⁴⁵ Other restraints are placed on the life of Muslims during the fast such as no smoking or sexual relations. At the end of the day the fast is broken with prayer and a meal called the *iftar*.⁴⁶ Fasting is meant to teach patience, sacrifice and humility.

"Ramaḍān is a time to fast for the sake of Allah, and to offer more prayer than usual. Muslims also believed through good actions, they get rewarded twice than they normally can achieve. During Ramaḍān, Muslims ask forgiveness for past sins, pray for guidance and help in refraining from everyday evils, and try to purify themselves through self-restraint and good deeds."⁴⁷

According to the Holy Qur'an:

*One may eat and drink at any time during the night "until you can plainly distinguish a white thread from a black thread by the daylight: then keep the fast until night."*⁴⁸

The good that is acquired through the fast can be destroyed by five things⁴⁹:

- the telling of a lie
- slander
- denouncing someone behind his back
- a false oath
- greed or covetousness

These are considered offensive at all times, but are most offensive during the Fast of Ramadan.

During Ramadan, in addition to the five daily prayers, there is the Taraweeh prayer (Night Prayer) that is said—some Muslims will pray all night. It is common for Muslims to go to the Mosque and spend many hours praying and studying the Qur'an.⁵⁰

When the fast ends (the first day of the month of Shawwal) a holiday called Id-al-Fitr begins that lasts for three days. During this holiday some city fairs are held, family and friends gather to pray and gifts are exchanged celebrating the end of the Fast of Ramadan.

It is important to have a "true" understanding of the Islamic faith since Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world. It is also important to note that Muslims have made an impact on the evolution of American society. Historically, Muslims have made major contributions in the humanities, the sciences, art etc. They explored North America 300 years before the "discovery" of the New World by Christopher Columbus. They used the Mississippi river as their access route to and from the continent's interior.

Muslims in America

Here are a few glimpses of Muslim life in American History as told by Fareed Numan (December 1992)⁵¹:

In **1178**, a Chinese document known as the Sung Document recorded the voyages of Muslim sailors to a land known as Mu-Lan-Pi (America).

In **1312**, African Muslims from Mandinga arrive in the Gulf of Mexico and explore the American interior via the Mississippi River.

In **1513**, Piri Reis completes his first world map, including the Americas, after researching maps from all over the world. The map is unsurpassed in its practicality and artistry.

In **1530**, African slaves arrive in America. Many of these slaves were sent to Mexico, Cuba, and South America. During the slave trade more than 10 million Africans were uprooted from their homes. More than 30 percent of these were Muslims.

In **1839**, Sayyid Sa'id, ruler of Oman, orders his ship The Sultana to set sail for America on a trade mission. The Sultana touched port in New York. Although the voyage was not a commercial success, it marked the point of successful friendly relations between the two countries that continue to this day.

In **1893**, Muslim immigrants from the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, etc. arrive in North America. They are mainly Turks, Kurds, Albanians, and Arabs.

In **1915**, Albanian Muslims build a Masjid in Maine and establish an Islamic association. By, 1919, they had established another Masjid in Connecticut. Theirs was one of the first associations for Muslims in the U.S.

In **1933**, The Nation of Islam, one of the significant organizations in American Muslim history is founded. It is responsible for converting a high number of African Americans to Islam.

In **1952**, Muslims in the Armed Services sue the federal government in order to be allowed to identify themselves as Muslims. Until then, Islam was not recognized as a legitimate religion.

Jews in America

Before we discuss the plight of Jews in America, we must have a clear understanding of what it means to be Jew. Many people think of Jews as a race, but if you look at the U.S. Census data you will not find Jewish under the same category as Blacks, Whites, Asian or Native American because there is a Jewish

faith not a race of Jews. A common ancestry or biological distinction is what makes up a race of people and this does not apply to Jews. There have been Jews of every racial group. The famous African American novelist Walter Mosley and the famous African American entertainers Sammy Davis, Jr. and Lisa Bonet are Jewish.⁵²

Some also think of Jews as a nationality but, Jews are not central to Israel as Judaism can be found all over the world. People of many different nationalities are Jewish and part of this religious group.⁵³

So, if anyone can be Jewish how does one join?

Many Jews become a part of this religious movement not because of anything they have done but through birth. If your mother is Jewish then you are Jewish and this affiliation stays with you all of your life even if you don't follow the religious practices--you would just be considered a non-religious Jew or secular Jew.⁵⁴

Another way to become Jewish is by a conversion process. According to the website by Rabbi Celso Cukierkorn, "The rituals of conversion will formally mark your acceptance of your new Jewish identity and your commitment to Judaism. But the work of creating Jewish memories for yourself, of shaping the Jewish human being that you will become, is a much more subtle and long-term process."⁵⁵

The conversion process has been a very important element of Judaism. But, over the years the different Jewish denominations of Orthodox, Conservative and Reform have disagreed about the content of the conversion process.⁵⁶ However, one adaptation of the various denominations of the 20th century regarding who is a Jew is that children of Jewish fathers, as well as adopted children, don't have to be converted but are accepted as Jews.⁵⁷

Jewish Immigrants

Now let's address the immigrant Jews that came to the United States. According to author Thomas Sowell, "this immigrant generation of Eastern European Jews flooded into the lower east side of Manhattan at the same time as the massive influx of Italian immigrants; helping to create one of the most crowded communities known to the United States. Unlike the German Jews before them, the eastern European immigrant Jews could not readily spread out across the nation or even across the city. Their observance of the Saturday Sabbath often

prevented them from access to certain types of jobs. Factories often operated on Saturdays, the Sabbath—observed by Orthodox Jews. In addition, their language differences also made it difficult for them to work or live among other Americans, as did their need for kosher food and a synagogue."⁵⁸

The German Jews and European Jews (who arrived later) had many differences in culture. The German Jews who were more reformed in their interpretation of the Torah (the Jewish Holy book) allowed them to fit into mainstream America. However, the European Jews were required to follow the customs of their ancestors, and did not regard themselves as having the option of what beliefs to follow.⁵⁹ The differences between the German Jews culture and mainstream America which were mainly Christians caused anti-Semitism in the U.S. to grow at unprecedented proportions in the last quarter of the 19th century with the mass arrival of these eastern European Jews.⁶⁰ This anti-Semitism affected all Jews in America not just the European Jews and as a result the German Jews lost their privilege of social clubs, posh hotels, and other benefits and honors now denied them because they were Jewish.⁶¹

Soon, employment opportunities were closed to the Jews just as was closed to the Irish, free Blacks and Native Americans.⁶²

Religious discrimination has therefore had its place in American society, so much so that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 Title VII prohibits religious discrimination. But even with religious discrimination being illegal, there are still many ways in which those who celebrate different holidays and customs are forced to make a choice between their religion and their job. Still today, many U.S. companies celebrate religious holidays and days off based upon Christianity.

Synagogues, Shuls and Temples

The Jewish religious place of worship is called a synagogue (called this by many conservative Jews) and it operates as a social center where Jewish prayer takes place, study and education of Judaism occurs, and where social work and charitable events happen. However, there are actually different terms utilized for this Jewish place of worship. Yiddish term of "shul" is what Orthodox and Chasidim Jews call it because it focuses on the synagogue's role as a place of study. This term can however, be unfamiliar to some modern Jews.⁶³

Reformed Jews use the word "temple or The Temple," which focuses on the synagogue's role as a meeting place.⁶⁴ But, be aware that "temple" can offend some traditional Jews because according to this group it does not denote

the full usage of this place of worship.⁶⁵ Last, Beit k'nesset meaning house of assembly is the Hebrew term for synagogue. According to the website, *Judaism 101*, the word "synagogue" is the best bet, because everyone knows what it means.⁶⁶

How are Synagogues structured?

There is a board of directors made up of members of the church that run the synagogue who do not answer to a central authority. While there are central organizations for the various movements of Judaism, the individual synagogues do not report to these organizations. The board has the important role of managing the synagogue's activities as well as hiring the rabbi, which in Hebrew means "teacher."⁶⁷

Rabbis can perform weddings but not to ordain the wedding just to make sure the civil law is followed. A rabbi more importantly provides leadership, guidance and education to the membership. However, a synagogue can exist without a rabbi where necessary religious services can be performed by synagogue members.⁶⁸

When it comes to "offering" in the Christian religion, where a collection plate or offering box takes money that members pay voluntarily in a Synagogue, members often pay annual dues (not an offering) to finance the synagogues operation. Members can also purchase reserved seats for services on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur (two Jewish holidays) or purchase memorial plaques or provide voluntary donations which go towards the operation of the Synagogue.⁶⁹

Worship at a Synagogue is also open to anyone. But, if you plan to worship or study regularly there then it is expected that you should cover your share of the synagogue's cost. The synagogue plays an important role in lives of Jews as it meets the educational, social and emotional needs of this religious community.

Jewish Beliefs

Bar or Bat Mitzvah

Bar Mitzvah is term utilized most often in Orthodox congregations and Bat Mitzvah in non-Orthodox congregations.⁷⁰ Bar and Bat Mitzvah is the coming of age where youth now become responsible for their actions and for boys this occurs at age 13 and age 12 for girls. Since girls typically mature physically and mentally earlier than boys their Bar and Bat Mitzvah occurs one year earlier.⁷¹

According to Jewish tradition, puberty which is occurring at this time means that boys and girls becoming bar and bat mitzvah, must now become morally aware of their actions and have a better understanding of the world and the people they want to be as participants in the world. Also, it is understood that these young people now can channel their energy to do good for others rather than submit to the natural desire of putting self first.⁷²

Shabbat

The *Shabbat* is seventh day of the Jewish week and a day of rest in Judaism. *Shabbat* is observed from sundown Friday until the appearance of three stars in the sky on Saturday night. Depending on the time of sunset at the various locations this exact time could change from week to week.⁷³ Some Jews who celebrate the Sabbath would not be allowed to work from Sunset till Sundown on Saturday.

Jewish Calendar, Festivals and Holidays

The Jewish calendar must keep up with the civil year so festivals occur at the "correct" time therefore the Jewish calendar has 12 months. The Jewish calendar runs according to the Moon, rather than the Sun, as the civil calendar does. Each Jewish month has either 29 or 30 days and every Jewish year is about 11 days shorter than a civil year.⁷⁴

Jewish festivals are celebrated on fixed dates. In order to do this, the calendar has leap years, with an extra month of Adar in January-February. The normal month of Adar (February-March) is then called Adar 2 and there are seven leap years every 19 years.⁷⁵ There is a celebration, *Rosh Chodesh*, for the beginning of each month.

The Jewish New Year, *Rosh Hashanah*, is on 1 and 2 Tishrei (September-October).⁷⁶ *Yom Kippur*, which is a 25-hour fast and a very formal festival, is on 10 Tishrei and the first ten days of Tishrei, which includes two festivals are known as the Ten Days of Penitence.⁷⁷

To understand the basic aspects of Jewish beliefs you would need to read the Torah, which means teaching. The Torah (Jewish holy book) is the written word that explains how Jews should act, think and feel about life, and it contains over 613 commandments. The Torah is divided into two parts: the Written Torah called the Tenakh and the Oral Torah, which is the explanation of the written Torah that is passed down verbally from generation to generation.⁷⁸ After the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, it was decided the Oral Torah should be written down so it would not be forgotten. The Mishnah is the written outline of the Oral Torah.⁷⁹

Whether you are Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, etc. religion is a personal matter. At this point, you may be wondering why do I need to know these details about the various religions? So I ask, how do you respect another person's religion in the workplace if you know nothing about it? Religion is often passed down through our family beliefs and culture which means we typically only know about the religion that we practice. If you are **agnostic**, a person who believes that they cannot have true knowledge about the existence of God (but does not deny that God might exist) or an **atheist**, a person who denies the existence of God, then you may know little about religion. Lack of exposure to another's religion or the various religious beliefs that exist can create a workplace where religious discrimination occurs simply from lack of knowledge. Cultural knowledge as it applies to religion is key to allowing religious freedom in the workplace.

Buddhism

More than 300 Million people in the world today are practicing Buddhism. Buddhism has spread throughout Asia from its homeland in India. It has had a significant and lasting impact on India, China, Japan, Korea, Thailand, Tibet and other Asian nations.⁸⁰ Buddhism, however, is not confined solely to Asia. In the past century, it has won admirers and followers in Europe and the United States. Indeed, a large majority of people in one of the states of the U.S., Hawaii, are Buddhists.⁸²

Definition of Buddhism

Buddhism is a path to spiritual discovery. Its founder Siddhartha Gautama, looked at the human condition, much as a doctor does and he found disease, decay and death.⁸³ He fully realized that joy and pleasure existed as well, but he recognized that those qualities did not last. All things in life were transient or temporary. So even in joy, the awareness of impermanence and death caused suffering.⁸⁴

Siddhartha Gautama left his parents, lovely wife, and a child in Kapila Palace at the age of 29.⁸⁵ He denounced the luxurious life of the kingdom and became a monk with a homeless life. After six years of practice, he attained Enlightenment under a Bodhi tree, and then He became the Sakyamuni Buddha; he is the only historical Buddha, The Buddha that revealed the truth.⁸⁶

Because of his Indian background, Siddhartha did not believe that death was a final release from suffering.⁸⁷ For in Indian religious tradition, the cycle of birth, death and rebirth goes on endlessly.⁸⁸ To solve and understand this problem of suffering, Siddhartha practiced severe self-denial and meditation. Once he gained "the answer or insight" he became known as the Buddha. This title means "the enlightened" or "the awakened."⁸⁹

This truth is said to have both universality and adequacy. Buddhist believe that the Buddha's teachings that were revealed 2,000 years ago still apply to current daily life or the teachings would not be true.⁹⁰ If the Buddha's teachings that can be applied in only one location were not adequate in other locations, the teachings would not be true, either; because the Buddha Dharma is universal and adequate, Buddhists have respected the teachings.⁹¹

Since the truth is universal and adequate, Buddhist believe that the truth that the Sakyamuni Buddha has revealed must have existed even before His Enlightenment, just as gravity must have existed before Newton discovered it.⁹² Buddhists believe that if the truth existed for millions, billions, trillions, or an infinite number of years ago, then many different Buddhas must have taught the truth in the past. A scripture of the religion says there were seven past Buddhas; Amida Buddha of the Nembutsu Sect is one of them; Dainichi Buddha of the Shingon Sect is also one of the seven past Buddhas; Amida Buddha lives in the far west, and Dainichi Buddha lives throughout the universe; only Sakyamuni Buddha lives in this world, where we live.⁹³

In Buddhism, the eternal past and future is imagined because there is no beginning and no end in time.⁹⁴ Since the Buddha Dharma is universal and adequate, a Buddha shall teach the same truth in the future and that Buddha is in the Tushita Heaven now as he is only Buddha in the future so far.⁹⁵ But there should be more Buddhas because time is limitless. The future Buddha is practicing Buddha's teachings in heaven now. He is not a Buddha yet, therefore he is called Bodhisattva Maitreya.⁹⁶ In a broad sense all that believe are Bodhisattvas because everyone seeks Enlightenment and has the desire to try to help others. Therefore everyone is a candidate to be a Buddha.

Like Christ and Muhammad, the founders of Christianity and Islam, the Buddha never wrote down his teachings. His disciples memorized his words, and their followers carried on the oral tradition. The first comprehensive written record of the Buddha's doctrine was not compiled until 500 years after his death.⁹⁷

Buddhist Practices

The practice of Buddhism does not, strictly speaking, require a temple (place of worship) or the intercession of a monk. Anyone can follow the teachings of Buddhism in his or her daily life. The temples provide a refuge for those who wish to devote themselves more deeply to the teachings of the Buddha.⁹⁸ Members of the Sangha (an organized assembly of Buddhist monks), however, are frequently called on to participate in ceremonies marking important events in people's lives— birth, marriage, and death.⁹⁹

It should be noted though that Buddhist customs vary from country to country. The study of Buddhism and its different forms are as follows:

- ❖ East Asian Buddhism - by Country Chinese
- ❖ Korean Japanese
- ❖ East Asian - by Type Nichiren
- ❖ Pure Land Shingon Tendai Zen
- ❖ South and Southeast Asian Theravada
Vietnamese
- ❖ Tibet and the Himalayas Tibetan
- ❖ Buddhist Schools of Thought Madhyamaka
- ❖ Yogâcâra

Buddhist Religious Observances

Buddhists are not required to attend regular services at a temple, as Christians attend church on various days of the week or Jews go to the synagogue on Saturday. Nor do Buddhists have specified daily times of prayer as Muslims. However, in Theravada Buddhism (one type of Buddhism), devout laypeople may observe a "Sabbath" called the Uposatha. This falls on the 1st, 8th, 15th, and 23rd days of the lunar month.¹⁰⁰

The faithful bring offerings to the temple on these days. Some may observe the day by remaining in seclusion to meditate, and use the temple for this purpose. Others may listen to religious sermons. On these days, the monks at the temple usually organize special rites that can include music, processions, and even fireworks displays.¹⁰¹

During the monsoon season that comes at differing times from June to October in Southeast Asia, Buddhists observe a time of penitence that is the equivalent of Christian Lent (the period preceding Easter that in the Christian Church is devoted to some type of fasting).¹⁰² During the approximately three-month season, monks observe stricter religious duties. Lay people increase their donations to the Sangha, an organized assembly of Buddhist monks. They accumulate merit by meditating and listening to sutras which are scripture containing the teachings of Buddha.

This tradition may be the oldest one of the religion. For it dates from the time when Buddha himself, along with his disciples, wandered through northeastern India preaching the Dharma (the ultimate law or doctrine taught by Buddha.) The rainy season, which in the nations of Southeast Asia is severe, required that the Buddha and his followers seek a place of refuge while it lasted.¹⁰³

The monsoon season is also the time for another important religious observance, called the vassa, or rain-retreat. This is the time when young people may choose to enter the Sangha, also in most Buddhist countries it is also common for adult males to enter the Sangha temporarily at this time to accumulate merit for themselves.¹⁰⁴

Buddhism and God

When Buddhists use the word God, the word has nothing in common with God—the Creator of the Christian, Jewish or Islamic faith.¹⁰⁵ Buddhist do not believe that gods are supernatural but instead Buddhists believe that the

supreme law of cause and effect governs all.¹⁰³ The existence of this absolute and ultimate law is proven over and over again with every new discovery of science. But, since everything that occurs in life cannot be explained through science, it is these unexplainable forces that Buddhists refer to as "gods."

Buddhist gods do not hold a controlling position like that of the monotheistic all-powering God.¹⁰⁶ On the contrary, Buddhist gods come out of life itself. They do not punish and they do not give deliverance. They respond to the sound of the ultimate law of the universe, Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo.¹⁰⁷ These "gods" are at the service of everyone who embraces the Gohonzon and its practices. This is a mandala, a symbolic representation of the ideal state of Buddhahood, or enlightenment, in which all the tendencies and impulses of life--from the most debased to the most noble--function in harmony toward happiness and creativity. The Gohonzon is not an "idol" or "god" to be supplicated or appeased but a means for reflection and a catalyst for inner change.¹⁰⁸

Buddhism and Prayer

"Buddhist prayer may be thought of as a focused expression of the same sentiments of yearning, commitment and appreciation as of other religions. It is, however, distinguished by the fact that Buddhism locates the divine within the life of the individual practitioner. The purpose of Buddhist prayer is to awaken the innate inner capacities of strength, courage and wisdom rather than to petition external forces."¹⁰⁹

Buddhist prayer is essentially the process by which a person's intensely felt desires and sufferings are transformed into compassion and wisdom. In this sense, it inevitably involves self-reflection, including a sometimes-painful confrontation with the person's own deeply rooted destructive tendencies. To quote Nichiren Daishonin, "Your practice of the Buddhist teachings will not relieve you of the sufferings of birth and death in the least, unless you perceive the true nature of your life." (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, "On Attaining Buddhahood in this Lifetime," page 3.)¹¹⁰

Buddhism: Dharma and Reincarnation

Dharma is the principle of righteousness. It is the principle of holiness. It is also the principle of unity whereby followers learn to be selfless by thinking of others first, being respectful of parents and elders, following divine law, and creating

mental, emotional and physical non-injury to all beings.

Rebirth or reincarnation as it is often called is the doctrine that indicates when a person dies the new person could come back as identical to or totally different from the old person. Reincarnation is one of the central tenets of Tibetan Buddhism. Reincarnation is often misunderstood as Buddhism does not teach that the soul is reincarnated but that the energy produced by the mental and physical activities of a being that has died creates a new mental and physical energy.¹¹¹

However, in Tibet as elsewhere, mainly of "the elite" understood the views of the philosophers to mean the following as it relates to rebirth: "all aggregates are impermanent; no 'ego' exists in the person, nor in anything," remain attached to the more simple belief in an undefined entity traveling from world to world, assuming various forms.¹¹²

Hinduism

Hinduism is India's indigenous religious and cultural system, followed today by nearly one billion adherents, mostly in India, but with large populations in many other countries. Hinduism is referred to as Sanatana Dharma, "eternal religion," and Vaidika Dharma, "religion of the Vedas."¹¹³ Hinduism encompasses a broad spectrum of philosophies ranging from pluralistic theism to absolute monism. It is a family of myriad faiths with four primary denominations: Saivism, Vaishnavism, Shaktism and Smartism.¹¹⁴ These four share the same culture and belief in karma, dharma, reincarnation, temple worship etc. even though they each have such very different views that they could be considered their own religion.¹¹⁵

This type of separatism allowed new religious traditions to form and among these were Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism. These religions while similar in cultural values still operate under different prisms.

Just like Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, Hinduism has no central headquarters. Hinduism is basically a 5000-year-old faith. It has had many founders in the past and various teaching lineages headed by a pontiff (a title given to a religious leader). Hinduism's nearly three million swamis, gurus and sadhus work tirelessly within and upon themselves and then, when ready, serve others, leading them from darkness into light, from death to immortality.¹¹⁶

Unlike some other religions where you are born into them or accepted unto them (by being saved or accepting the faith) that does not necessarily apply to Hinduism. Hinduism is more than just a "religion" it is a way of life, a culture, both religious and secular.¹¹⁷ Hindus don't see religion as one component or a separate system in their life, instead it encompasses all of life. Hindus can have this view because Hinduism in its practice accepts all forms of beliefs. There is not just one way of practicing this religion and lifestyle. Those who choose to live according to the basic beliefs and values are then Hindus.

Sri K. Navaratnam of Sri Lanka, devotee of Paramaguru Siva Yogaswami for some 40 years, in his book *Studies in Hinduism* quotes from the book, *Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines*, "Hindus are those who adhere to the Hindu tradition, on the understanding that they are duly qualified to do so really effectively, and not simply in an exterior and illusory way; non-Hindus, on the contrary, are those who, for any reason whatsoever, do not participate in the tradition in question."¹¹⁸ Sri K. Navaratnam enumerates a set of basic beliefs held by Hindus¹¹⁹:

1. A belief in the existence of God.
2. A belief in the existence of a soul separate from the body.
3. A belief in the existence of the finitizing principle known as avidya or maya.
4. A belief in the principle of matter--prakriti or maya. A belief in the theory of karma and reincarnation.
5. A belief in the indispensable guidance of a guru to guide the spiritual aspirant towards God Realization.
6. A belief in moksha, or liberation, as the goal of human existence.
7. A belief in the indispensable necessity of temple worship...in religious life.
8. A belief in graded forms of religious practices, both internal and external, until one realizes God.
9. A belief in ahimsa as the greatest dharma or virtue.
10. A belief in mental and physical purity as indispensable factors for spiritual progress.

Virtuous living, dharma: Living a life of duty and good conduct by being selfless and thinking of others first. It is being also respectful of parents, elders and swamis, following divine law, especially ahimsa, mental, emotional and physical non-injury to all beings. Thus they resolve karmas.

Pilgrimage, tirthayatra: At least once a year worldly and secular activities are set aside for time with God at temples or locations near or far.

Rites of passage, samskara: Observance and celebration of the rites of birth, name-giving, head-shaving, first feeding, ear-piercing, first learning, coming of age, marriage and death.

Wicca

Wicca is one of about 17 unrelated activities with more than 500,000 followers, which has been called Witchcraft.¹²¹ Religious conservatives often link Witchcraft to Satanism, which relates Satan worship and Satanic Ritual Abuse. The problem here is that the single word "Witchcraft" has so many unrelated meanings. But, if you have never heard of Wicca you be asking is Wicca a religion?

According to the Civil rights Act of 1964, Title VII requires employers to accommodate only those religious beliefs that are "sincerely held."¹²² If Wicca is not considered a bona fide religion, then it has no legal protection. Some say yes it is a bona fide religion and others say no. However, through a Michigan court case it was determined that Wicca was indeed a religion in this States consideration. The case was brought in 1983 in the U.S. District Court in Michigan and it was found that three employees of a prison had restricted an inmate in the performance of his Wiccan rituals. The court found that this "*deprived him of his First Amendment right to freely exercise his religion and his Fourteenth Amendment right to equal protection of the laws.*"¹²³

Wicca is seen as a controversial religion to some based, in part, on ancient, northern European Pagan beliefs in a fertility Goddess and her consort, a horned God.¹²⁴ Although the religion is a modern creation, some of its sources pre-date the Christian era by many centuries. Most Wiccans do not believe that their religion is a direct, continuous descendent of this earlier religion. They see it as a modern reconstruction.¹²⁵

Author Joanna Hautin-Mayer in *When is a Celt not a Celt?* who takes a peek into the Neopagan views of history, has written:

*"We know tragically little about the actual religious expressions of the ancient Celts. We have a few myths and legends, but very little archeological evidence to support our theories. We have no written records of their actual forms of worship, and the accounts of their culture and beliefs written by their contemporaries are often highly biased and of questionable historical worth."*¹²⁶

The above is part of the reason that Wicca is seen as a recently created Neopagan religion. The various branches of Wicca can be traced back to Gardnerian Witchcraft, which was founded in the United Kingdom during the late 1940s.¹²⁷ Wicca is based on the symbols, seasonal days of celebration, beliefs and deities of ancient Celtic society though. Added to this material were Masonic and ceremonial magical components from recent centuries. In this respect, it is a religion whose roots go back almost three millennia to the formation of Celtic society circa 800 BCE.¹²⁸

A follower of Wicca is called a Wiccan. In the U.S., Canada and Europe and especially among the teen population, Wicca and Neopagan types of religions are experiencing continued growth. Since Wicca does not encourage autocracy, paternalism, sexism, homophobia, nor is it a religion that promotes insensitivity to the environment it is popular among the young who are more sensitive to these issues.¹²⁹ Many North Americans of European decent, who are keen to discover their ancestral heritage, are also being attracted to this religion.

Wiccans generally consider themselves to be Witches, Neopagans, and Pagans. However, not all Witches, Neopagans and Pagans are Wiccans. The terms *Witch*, *Neopagan* and *Pagan* can also refer to followers of many other faith traditions. Because of religious propaganda dating from the late Middle Ages, Wicca has often been incorrectly associated with Satanism.

Among those who research religion, it appears that Wicca became a religious movement in the 1950s in England. Wicca is currently one of the largest of the minority religions in the United States with estimates of membership at 750,000.¹³⁰ This estimate makes Wicca about the 5th largest organized religion in the United States, behind Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism.

Because of the controversy or myths surrounding this religion many Wiccans hide their religious beliefs and practices. Those who allow their faith to be known publicly are often heavily persecuted in North America.¹³¹ Many physical assaults,

arson, and economic attacks are reported yearly. There have even been shootings, one public mass stoning and a lynching in recent years.¹³²

Some people believe that if others knew of the connection of this religion to Christianity that it would be better accepted. The first missionary to the Celts may have been St. Paul as he sought converts to Christianity in the Pagan Celtic land of Galatia (now part of Turkey) as recorded in his Epistle to the Galatians of the Christian Scriptures (New Testament).¹³³ Later Missionaries and the Roman army gradually spread Christianity across Europe, easily converting the rulers and the Druidic priesthood, but having less success in bringing the common folk to the new religion.

A religious day celebrated by Wiccans is the day of Halloween. The Halloween season of OCT-31 to NOV-2 each year is unique. It includes a Neopagan Sabbat, Samhain, which is usually celebrated on or near the evening of October 31.¹³⁴ It was originally a celebration of the final harvest of the growing season among the ancient Celts. According to research, the Celts believed that during this time of the year friends and relatives who were deceased would come back with souls resembling an animal--likely a black cat. This is where the symbol of the black cat became associated with Halloween.¹³⁵

Also during the Samhain which was a fire festival where bonfires were lit on hills in honor of the Gods, Celts would go door to door to gather food that they would offer to their Gods.¹³⁶ Thus, possibly creating the Halloween tradition of going "trick or treating."

Once the fires were put out at the fire festival the Celts would often feel afraid to walk in the dark due to any looming evil spirits. So instead they would try to scare the evil spirits themselves by dressing up in costumes.¹³⁷ The embers they held at the fires would also have carvings in them to scare the evil spirits. Children continue to dress up today in various costumes and pumpkins get carved instead of embers. These Halloween traditions are followed by many (not just Wiccans) who allow their children to trick or treat and participate in Halloween festivities.

Wiccan Beliefs

According to Wicca Philosophy the Universe is created and maintained by the balance of the Divine Feminine and Divine Masculine principles...

- Yin and Yang,

- Sacred Dark and Divine Light,
- receptivity and activity,
- matter and energy,
- union and individuation

In other words, many Wiccans perceive the Universe in terms of a balanced duality ... qualities that move into the world, and qualities that are outside of manifestation. These qualities are often manifested as gender -- and not only in Wicca -- but are themselves entirely independent of physical form. It is convenient to call one of these qualities "God/male" and one "Goddess/female."

Not because Wiccans believe they are male and female but because in society we're designed -- and trained -- to think in terms of gender.

Despite the issue of gender, Wiccans celebrate the sexual polarity in nature, and view the female as equal to the male. Some even view the female as superior in some respects, but in general male/female balance is an important concept in Wiccan belief.

Wicca represents an ancient religion of love for life and nature. Wicca is an irrepressible religion because it stimulates the intellect, promotes a simple, practical way of life and, most importantly, is emotionally satisfying according to its followers.

The main tenet of Wicca is the "Wiccan Rede" which states "And it harm none, do as ye will" and the Wicca law states that:

*"All good that a person does to another returns three fold in this life; harm is also returned three fold."*¹³⁸

It is this main belief that prevents Wiccans from doing harm to themselves or to others, or attempting to manipulate others, or taking harmful drugs, etc. Thus, many activities that have been attributed to Wiccans, from the laying of curses to conducting love spells, are strictly forbidden to them.

The following are other general beliefs of most Wiccans¹³⁹:

- Everyone has the divine (or goddess) within.
- A creative force exists in the universe, called "The One" or "The All."

- The Goddess and the God represent the female and male aspects of the All.
- Divine forces or nature spirits are invoked in rituals.
- The Goddess, as either a symbol or a real entity, is the focus of worship.
- Nature and the earth are sacred manifestations of the Goddess.
- Everyone has his or her own spiritual path to follow.
- Rituals and celebrations are linked to the seasons and moon phases.
- One should develop natural gifts for divination or occult magic (often spelled 'magick' by occultists.)
- Meditation, visualization, invocation (calling on forces or gods/goddesses), chanting, burning candles and special rituals trigger a sense of the mystical, thus reinforcing the core belief system.

Wicca is also a religion of the natural grounded in the earth where it is believed that all living things like planets, humans, animals, plants, rocks and even stars have a spirit.¹⁴⁰ Sexuality is valued, and regarded as a gift of the Goddess and God, to be engaged in with joy and responsibility, and without manipulation.

Why learn about various religions?

After reading about all the religions in this chapter, no one would expect you to be an expert on these different religions or all the other religions that exist. However, what is important to know is that while there are many similarities amongst religions there are also differences that make each religion unique. These differences subsist of how many times the religious must pray, if at all; to the day of worship they observe, if at all; to whether they tithe (pay a percentage of their earnings), fast, take up an offering or pay a fee. Since the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects against discrimination based upon religion as well as requires accommodation of certain religious beliefs—it is important to be familiar with especially the largest religions in the United States. If you know very little about the various religions, how do you, as a manager, protect a person's rights or provide religious accommodation as required by law?

Religious Accommodation

It is up to the employer to determine when and if a religious accommodation is necessary as the employer cannot arbitrarily make the decision to "not" accommodate an employee. The first step is to determine if it is a sincerely held religious belief.

So, what is a sincerely held religious belief?

- A belief required of a recognized religious organization or
- Religious practices not just of an organized or recognized religion but, is not a political, cultural or heritage belief. It must be based upon a religious practice.
- It is also not the person's preference but what is required by the religion.

How should the request be made by the employee?

The employee must clearly explain why an accommodation is needed indicating what religious belief would be broken or not adhered to. The following are some causes for a religious accommodation¹⁴¹:

- An employee needs their weekly Sabbath day off for religious observance. The Sabbath day is a holy day and there is no working on this day.
- An employee may need a particular day off each year for a religious holiday.
- An employee may be required to attend a religious pilgrimage and they have no vacation time.
- An employee may need to wear religious dress or maintain a certain physical appearance (not cutting facial hair) as a requirement of their religion.
- An employee may need to have a place to pray because a number of daily prayers are required and this will occur during work time.

Now once the sincerely held belief has been requested and established then there are a number of things that can be done to accommodate. For an employee who needs time off or can't work on Saturdays due to the Sabbath they can take an unpaid day, swap shifts or days with an employee, switch an off day or have flexible scheduling (work Sunday instead of Saturday or work Christmas instead of their religious holiday) and they could even be allowed to just work Monday through Thursday for those who have to observe a Friday-night Sabbath.¹⁴²

You could also allow for voluntary assignment substitutions, lateral transfers to other departments or positions in the company, use of lunch or breaks in exchange for early departure or prayer time.

After reading the above, you may now be thinking: do I have to provide the accommodation to the employees' specific request?

No. The employer can accommodate but not necessarily to the specific "desires" of the employee. For instance in the case of the employee who can't cut his facial hair, the employer could indicate that according to safety standards a beard must be a certain length and covered thereby allowing the beard but with specific requirements. In another instance, let's say the employer has a test scheduled for a Sabbath day but the employee would like to take it instead on the following Monday. If the same test or training is being given at another location on another day other than the Sabbath but not on the Monday the employee may be required to take it elsewhere--say on the following Wednesday not Monday. In addition, the employee may be required to use personal time to take the test or training.¹⁴³

Now, your next thought could be: how does an employer allow for such things when there is a union mandated seniority system for job assignments etc. Do I have to accommodate every sincerely held belief?

No. If the employer can prove that by allowing the belief to be accommodated it creates an undue hardship then the employer does not have to accommodate. But, what constitutes an undue hardship? This answer is not so "cut or dry" as there is not a concrete definition of undue hardship, but it was determined by the United States Supreme Court that a company does not have to incur more than "minimal" costs to accommodate an employees' religious belief.¹⁴⁴ For example, if time off is needed to participate in a religious holiday this does not have to be paid time off--the United States Supreme Court indicated that a reasonable accommodation is nonpaid leave for a religious observance unless all other leaves in the company are paid.¹⁴⁵ This would mean the only unpaid leave was for religious observance, then this would not be fair. Other issues that can indicate undue hardship is seniority violation based upon union contracts as well as paying extra or overtime pay to accommodate.

Now, what if someone makes up a religion where they indicate that this religion does not allow them to work when it's raining outside?

The employer can deny the accommodation if it is not a sincerely held belief.¹⁴⁶ However, the worst mistake you can make as an employer is to assume that it is not a bona fide religion or sincerely held belief. Instead it is important (when unknown) to research the religion or belief. Some religions have beliefs unlike your own, making them seem fictitious--but just because you think they are fictitious does not mean that they are. Always do your homework before saying no. Talk with your company's human resource department or lawyer to make sure you are doing everything possible to try to accommodate the employee--don't just say no.

Concluding Thoughts

Based upon the religious diversity in the U.S. it is critical for managers and employees alike to understand the religious differences of others so that they can work effectively, respect others beliefs and help to de-escalate potentially explosive situations that can occur from lack of understanding.

There are many different religious practices of the diverse communities that are represented in the workplace. There may be specific prayer times of Muslims; Sikhs may be required to wear five holy items (including a small dagger); and some Hindus cannot shake the hands of strangers, particularly members of the opposite sex. While it is not possible to know all of the religious customs of various groups, it is possible to be open-minded so as to respect religious difference.

End of Chapter Questions

1. What are some basic beliefs of Christians, Muslims and Jews?
2. What are three things that are common amongst Christians, Muslims and Jews?
3. What are two significant holidays of each of the following religions:
 - a. Christianity
 - b. Islam
 - c. Judaism
4. How does the Buddhist view of God differ from some other religions?
5. What is dharma and karma as practiced by Buddhist or Hindus?
6. What practices of Wiccans and Hindus might require a religious accommodation?
7. What are ways of showing cultural sensitivity to Muslims during Ramadan and Jews during Shabbat?
8. What is an agnostic or atheist?

9. What are four examples of religious accommodation that can be made for an employee?

Internet Exercise

So that you do not have to self-identify what religion you practice, pick a religion *other than* the one discussed in the text or one that you practice (if any). Find information on this chosen religion using the Internet or the library searching world religions. Summarize the key beliefs about the religion and how it is similar or dissimilar to other religions that you have read about.

The religion I am researching is _____

End of Chapter Exercise

Do I Accommodate?

Case One:

I am a truck driver and have been on "light duty" for the past several weeks. Last week my supervisor told me to take one of the office girls to the bank to make a company deposit. The other employees made crude remarks about her and me. I then refused to take her. I explained to my supervisor that I felt it would be inappropriate for me (being married) to take her because of my religious beliefs. After yelling and swearing at me in front of the other employees he told me to go home without the overtime pay. Then he told another employee (with less seniority) to take her, which he did.

Was I wrong to say no? Was he wrong to send me home?

Case Two:

Mary Tiano sued her employer Dillard Department Stores for failure to make reasonable accommodation of her religious beliefs. Tiano was a top sales person for many years and a devout Roman Catholic. In late August of 1988, she learned of a

pilgrimage to Medjugorje, Yugoslavia taking place between October 17 and October 26. Several people have claimed that visions of the Virgin Mary appeared to them in Medjugorje, although the Catholic Church has not designated Medjugorje an official pilgrimage site of the Church. Tiano testified that on August 22, 1988, she had a "calling from God" to attend this pilgrimage. Tiano requested an unpaid leave of absence to attend. Dillard's vacation policy prohibited employees from taking leave between October and December, the store's busy holiday season. As a result, Tiano's request was denied. She went anyway, and when she returned to work she was informed that she had voluntarily resigned and would not be offered reemployment. Was Dillard's correct? What rights did Tiano have?