



Ask Rose Ariadne
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Wicca: What Makes It a Religion?

The exact nature of religion has long been debated by philosophers, theologians and laymen alike. Creating either a precise or an all-inclusive definition cannot really be achieved. For this reason, a general and generic definition such as the one offered by Encarta, is probably the best to work with when deciding whether Wicca can be classified as a religion or not: "... people's beliefs and opinions concerning the existence, nature, and worship of a deity or deities, and divine involvement in the universe and human life."

The perhaps, it would be appropriate to include the definition of Wicca according to the Britannica Concise Encyclopedia: "A polytheistic Neo-Pagan nature religion inspired by various pre-Christian western European beliefs, whose central deity is a mother goddess and which includes the use of herbal magic and benign witchcraft."

That Wicca is a religion, given the definitions available today, cannot be disputed. Let us glance at the elements of Wiccan philosophy and practices that supports its 'religionship':

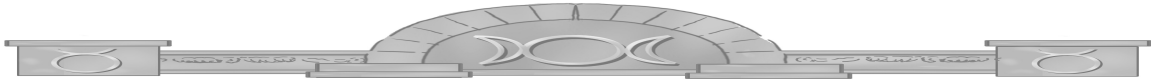
1. Wiccans acknowledge the existence of Deity

All religions have doctrines. Those of Wicca are very explicit: Deity is omnipresent and inspiring; all beings possess a spirit and all spirits are interconnected; all of creation is a manifestation of the Divine. The Goddess and God are acknowledged as aspects of a Deity, humankind cannot comprehend.

2. Wiccans views Deity as creating the Universe

As is the case in all religion, there are creation myths in Wicca too. Whilst not all Wiccans share a single creation myth, the underlying theme throughout is that the Universe and all it contains were created by the Divine.





A very good article, that offers an overview of all the various creation myths across the globe, can be found at

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creation_within_belief_systems#Wicca

3. Wiccans interact with Deity through ritual, thereby acknowledging divine involvement.

Wiccans celebrate the eight Sabbats on the Wheel of the Year and the thirteen Esbats which coincide with the full moon in honor of Deity and in tribute to nature. On each of Sabbats and Esbats rituals are performed in worship. Some Wiccans add celebrations at the dark moon and also at first and last quarter of the Moon.

In addition to celebrating the sacred Sabbats and Esbats, Wiccans also do daily devotionals and prayers to their Deities.

4. Wiccans believe in life after death.

Wiccans believe that all of nature (and that includes humans), is infused by a Divine spark or soul. After death, the soul returns to the spirit world to rest and recover before returning to earth in a new incarnation. In Wicca, - unlike many other religions -, there is neither a hell, nor a Satan-like figure.

5. Wicca has its roots in ancient religions.

Wicca has its roots in ancient Goddess worship – a religion that predates all the modern mainstream religions such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam. This is a claim that some students of religion dispute, but have nevertheless failed to prove otherwise.

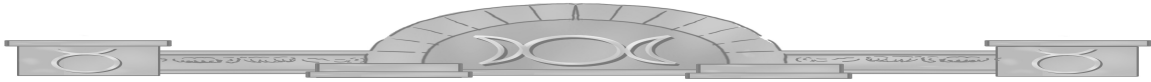
During the Paleolithic era, people believed in Gods and Goddesses, served them and worshipped them through creating statues and by performing rituals. Archeologically, this can be substantiated as – amongst others - many goddess figures have been discovered during excavations over the past one hundred years or so.

By implication, this means that Wicca, as a modern goddess religion, was born from the ashes of the ancient goddess religion practiced from Paleolithic times.

6. Wiccans have religious rules or laws

As with all religions, there are quite a few laws in Wicca that govern morality and conduct. The most generally accepted set of rules is called the Wiccan Rede.





The two most important laws in the Rede are as follows:

The first law states: "An Ye Harm None, Do What Ye Will". This means that if you do no harm to anything or anybody, you can do whatever you wish.

The second law states "Mind the Threefold Law you should, Three times bad and three times good." The second law tells you that every deed committed, good or bad will return to you three times stronger than when it was done.

To conclude: Wicca contains all the elements of a religion: It has, in one form or the other, been a part of humanity since the earliest ages and it will – no doubt – survive the many centuries to come. An empowering religion that enables you to find your own truth and your own path, Wicca is growing at a steady pace. It is conservatively estimated that in excess of 1,000,000 people worldwide are active practitioners today.

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