

Paranormal "U"**Religion and the Paranormal and/or Supernatural**

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Webster's dictionary defines Religion as:

- the service and worship of God or the supernatural
- commitment of devotion to religious faith or observance
- a personalized set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs and practices
- a cause: principle, or system of beliefs held to with ardor and faith

Supernatural as:

- of or relating to an order of existence beyond the visible, observable universe especially of or relating to God or a god, demigod, spirit or devil
- departing from what is normal especially so as to appear to transcend the laws of nature
- attributed to an invisible agent (ghost or spirit)

Jack David Eller, Cultural Anthropology: Global Forces, Local Lives, 2nd edition 2013 defines religion as such; Religion is the part of any culture that involves ideas, actions, objects, and/or institutions relating to non-human and/or super-human beings, forces, and/or ideals with which humans enter into social relationships.

By definition, religion in itself, is supernatural thus here in lies the question of the relationship between religion and the supernatural. With the increased popularity of "ghost hunting" shows, paranormal experiences are no longer as taboo to discuss as in the past. That said, not all religions are the same in respect to the potential of a ghostly encounter.

Christianity as a whole is split on this issue. Catholic doctrines teach of a place between heaven and hell called purgatory or limbo where souls temporarily reside before moving on to their final destination. This "in between time" can be used to reconcile the existence of ghosts, while not specifically teaching about the existence of them. Other branches of Christianity, do not teach of this "in between time", upon death the soul goes directly to heaven or hell.

The most widely accepted belief, within Islam, is that the spirit of a person remains in the proximity of the physical body until the time of judgement. While as a whole, Islam does not teach the existence of ghosts or reincarnation, Islam does teach of the existence of the jinn. According to Religion and Folk Cosmology, by El-Sayed El-Aswad, some Muslims believe that two types of jinn exist. The evil jinn that is not human in origin and one that was of human origin. The latter is believed to be a result of an unnatural death- killed, having their life abruptly cut short, thus left to wander the earth where the physical body lived. A Muslim sect, known as the Sufi, do believe in reincarnation.

Hindu teachings describe humans as having two bodies and when a life ends prematurely, such as in tragedy, the person (ghost) will remain in

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an ethereal state until the time of the life is complete. At that time the transition in to an entirely new body- reincarnation will occur. The time spent between incarnation can be a time of great suffering for the ghost as they do not have a physical body through which they can interact in the physical world. It is believed the ghost retains its senses and physical desires, however without the physical body, the ghost is unable to satisfy those desires. The soul will continue this cycle of birth and rebirth till it is free of all earthly and physical desires as that ends the cycle and consequently ends the suffering. Hindu beliefs also teach that we are surrounded by spirit entities existing in the ether that encompasses everything. Ether, also called akasha, can be equated to energy or spirit. The Akashic records are believed to contain a complete record of every event, energy imprint, throughout time. These records can be, accessed by those that can use their third eye.

In Chinese thought, the world is populated by a multitude of spirits, both good and evil. Evil spirits are believed to avoid light, thus many rituals and practices include fire and light. Not all spirits are evil, some are just unhappy. A spirit may be unhappy because of a bad death, lack of descendants to perform the rituals, thus becomes a ghost. Ghosts may attack the living to get their needs met or at least draw attention to their plight. The seventh month of the Chinese lunar year is called Ghost month and the 15th day being the ghost day is when the most attention is payed to them.

Judaism: www.jewishghosts.com

This is a very small window in to the subject of how different religions view the paranormal/supernatural and by no means covers the spectrum.

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