
Development Of Religion Freedom In The 1960s

Religion has played a big part in shaping the United States. It is important in many ways, bringing tradition, diversity, and sometimes peace. The 1960s was an important decade when it comes to religion. Without many events that occurred in those years, our nation would be missing much of the diversity we have today. The 1960s was the decade of religious change, when the past dominant population, Protestants, began shrinking due to other beliefs.

Religion grew diverse during the 1960s, but before, the United States looked fairly different. Before the 1960s, most people held the same belief: Christianity. The seven types of Protestants dominated, with a few Catholics and Jews (Funes "Religion in the 1960s" 2012). Nobody had to think much about different religious practices because there was almost no diversity (Liu & Liu "A Brief History of Religion and the U.S. Census" 2013). Most leaders were heads of churches because religion was valued so much. Also, conservatives were more common. Because practically everyone followed the same culture, there was no need to separate religion from politics or education (Beinart "America's Empty-Church Problem" 2017). Before the 1960s, there was not much diversity, and that would soon change.

During the beginning of the 1960s, religion started changing. About 741 people in one thousand were religious in the year 1961, and most of those religious people practiced some form of Christianity. Before 1962, 42 percent of schools required or tolerated Bible reading, and 50 percent performed a devotional exercise ("Site Deactivated"). After 1962, the year a significant amount of new religion entered, the Supreme Court repeatedly ruled it unconstitutional for public school officials to plan prayers (Gallup, Inc "Americans More Religious Now Than Ten Years Ago, but Less So Than in the 1950s and 1960s" 2001). In that same year, all official school prayers and recitations were determined unconstitutional, even if they were optional (A.U.C. "The United States of America"). Another significant event was a theologically liberal religious movement called Unitarian Universalism. It was the result of Unitarian and Universalist churches uniting as they tried to stay popular. As more religions entered, more people started to discriminate against certain religions. Even after discrimination against certain races or sexes began fading, discrimination against certain religions continued to take place. Some people were unhappy with some changes. For example, many believed public school prayers were fine if they were optional and were unhappy with the Supreme Court ruling it unconstitutional. New religions began entering during the beginning of the decade, and they are still expanding today.

During the middle of the 1960s, religious freedom started growing ("History of the United States (1964–1980)" 2019). When immigration restrictions were removed in the year 1965, more religions entered, increasing the popularity of Eastern religions. Many small religious cults also began forming after 1965. By 1966, the religious population grew to 724 out of one thousand. Not many people felt extreme hate or support for any events that occurred in the middle of the 60s. Only a few preferred keeping the immigration restrictions. Though the middle of the 1960s had few major events, the removal of immigration restrictions and the formation of cults brought extra diversity to the United States.

The beginning of the 1960s was when people with new religions came, and the middle of the 1960s was when the diversity of the new religions began growing, but late into the 1960s was

the change in people with traditional beliefs. Most priests resigned in the year of 1968, and religions began conflicting with women and gay activism that began. Young people were drawn to evangelical Christianity, and megachurches exploded, neither of which were considered traditional before the late 60s. For a bit of time, because women and gay activism conflicted with some religions, activists and religious people began disliking each other. Even though not much new religion came to the country in the late 1960s, they were important years of change in traditional religious beliefs.

The journey Protestants took was one of starting big and losing popularity. Protestants began as the dominant population but shrank as the decade passed. Some liberal Protestants worked with Roman Catholics for peace and rights because Protestants were not at as much peace as they were before new religions challenged them. A few Protestants felt persecuted, but most people in the United States either did not have an opinion on Protestants becoming less popular or were happy because there was more diversity (Jenkins "The Religious World Changed in 1968, but Not in the Ways We Think" 2018). Through the decade, Protestants went from the dominant population to just a religion.

Unlike the Protestant population, Catholicism, a more oppressed part of Christianity, found its way to popularity. Before the 1960s, there were some Catholics in the United States, but Protestants clearly outnumbered Catholics. One of the major events that helped Catholics become accepted was John F. Kennedy, a Catholic, becoming president. Because he became president, Catholicism grew more popular through the years and received more respect. John F. Kennedy helped Catholics keep up with the growing numbers of Pentecostals, Baptists, and Mormons. Catholicism also became popular when Roman Catholics worked with the liberal Protestants for peace and rights. However, though Catholics became more accepted, people opposed Catholicism when John F. Kennedy first became president because they were angry a Catholic was president. Despite this, hate towards Catholicism quickly diminished. Christianity remains the most popular belief today (Buller A faith like mine: a celebration of the world's religions-- seen through the eyes of children 2005). Catholicism contributed to that. Even though many first disliked the growth of Catholicism, they came to tolerate it. As the years of the 1960s passed, Catholicism grew from a small, oppressed belief to a more common one.

The path Eastern religions took after arriving in the United States brought many beliefs to the country (Organization "How The '60s Transformed The Catholic Church Forever" 2011). There were practically no people who practiced Eastern religions until 1960. With time, Hinduism, Daoism, and Zen Buddhism became popular through the 60s ("History of the United States (1945–1964)" 2019). Fortunately for people who practiced Eastern religions, not many people disapproved of the more peaceful ones; only a few disliked the new diversity and wished the United States could remain mostly Christian. Even though not many events regarding Eastern religions occurred, if Eastern religions had never moved west, our nation would not be as diverse.

The 1960s was decades ago, but religious events in the past had impacts on today. The baby boom helped spread religion to make it as common as it is ("History of religion in the United States" 2019). Also, some baby boomers dropped out of the church, leading to more variety ("History of Religion in America"). Adding onto that, many events helped religious tolerance and freedom grow, leading to religion being separated from school, politics, and more ("Spirituality and Religion"). Also, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, or the SCLC, made by Martin Luther King Jr., helped fight segregation (Melton ""New Age movement" 2016). Plus,

other qualities have more value today because the value of religion decreased so much back then (Sides "How Democrats became secular and Republicans became religious. (It's not what you think.)" 2015). If no events happened, religion would be less common and have less variety. There would also probably be less religious tolerance and freedom as well. Martin Luther King Jr. might have never made the SCLC, leading to more segregation, and other valued qualities would mean less. Even though the 1960s was a long time ago, events that occurred back then still affect us to today.

Different religions grew in popularity through the 1960s, the decade of religious change, resulting in fewer Protestants. Many events took place regarding religion. It was the decade when diversity came, grew, and modified traditions to change the popularity of religions. It was when religious events took place to shape our country into what it is today. The 1960s was when many of the most important religious events happened, and without even a few of them, our position in religion would be much different from today.

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