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## The Formation And Development Of Religion In The 1960s

Religion has been huge when it comes to shaping our nation. It brings tradition, differences, and occasional peace. When it comes to religion, the 1960s was an important decade. If many events in those years had not happened, our nation would not have the diversity people have right now. This decade was when religion started to drastically change, when Protestantism, which was extremely popular back then, 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 were Christians. Protestants dominated, with the occasional Catholic or Jew (Funes "Religion in the 1960s" 2012). Nobody thought much of different religions 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 could be found more often than liberals. Because practically everyone followed the same traditions, 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.

When it was 1960, beliefs began changing. Around 741 in one thousand people practiced a devotional exercise during 1961, and many 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 new religion became significant enough to measure, it was repeatedly ruled that it was unconstitutional when public school officials planned 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 made unconstitutional, even optional ones (A.U.C. "The United States of America"). Unitarian Universalism, a theologically liberal religious event, also happened. It happened when Unitarian and Universalist churches united as they tried to stay popular. As more religion 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 it being ruled unconstitutional. New religious beliefs began entering during the beginning of the decade, which continue to expand today.

When the 1960s reached its midpoint, freedom of religion started to grow ("History of the United States (1964–1980)" 2019). When immigration restrictions were removed in 1965, more new beliefs entered, increasing the popularity of Eastern religions. Many small cults also began forming after 1965. By 1966, 724 in one thousand were religious. Not many people felt extreme hate or support for the removal of immigration restrictions and the cults. Only a few preferred keeping immigrants restricted. Though the middle of the 1960s had few major events, when immigration restrictions were removed and cults were formed, it brought extra diversity to the United States.

The beginning of the 1960s was when people practicing new religions came, and new religions began growing more diverse as the decade reached its midpoint, but changes in tradition

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happened later. Most priests resigned in 1968. Religions began opposing activism that began for women and gays. Evangelical Christianity drew young people, and megachurches exploded, neither considered regular before the late 60s. For a bit of time, because women and gay activism conflicted some beliefs, activists and religious people disliked each other. Even though not much new religion came to the nation during the late 1960s, they were important years when it came to change in traditional 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 beliefs challenged them. A few Protestants felt persecuted, but everybody else did not have an opinion on Protestants becoming less popular or felt happy because of the diversity (Jenkins "The Religious World Changed in 1968, but Not in the Ways We Think" 2018). As the 1960s passed, Protestantism began as dominant and ended up just being another belief.

Unlike Protestantism, Catholicism, which was more oppressed, 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 Pentecostals, Baptists, Mormons, and more oppressed people, who were also growing. 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 more of a popular one.

Eastern beliefs took a path after arriving in our country that brought many beliefs to the country (Organization "How The '60s Transformed The Catholic Church Forever" 2011). There were practically no people who practiced an Eastern religion until 1960. With time, Daoists, Hindus, Zen Buddhists, and other people who practiced Eastern religions became popular ("History of the United States (1945–1964)" 2019). Luckily 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 have as much diversity.

The 1960s was decades ago, but past events about religion had impacts on today. There was a baby boom that helped spread varying beliefs and make them even more common ("History of religion in the United States" 2019). Also, some baby boomers left churches, leading to more variety ("History of Religion in America"). Plus, a lot of events helped tolerance or freedom of religion grow, leading to school and politics being separated from religion ("Spirituality and Religion"). Also, the SCLC, or Southern Christian Leadership Conference, 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 beliefs decreased so much back then

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(Sides “How Democrats became secular and Republicans became religious. (It's not what you think.)” 2015). Had no events happened, religions would be less common. They would also 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. The 1960s was a long time ago, but events back then still affect us today.

A variety of religions grew popular from 1960 to 1969, when religions changed, leaving us with fewer Protestants. Many events took place regarding religious beliefs. It was 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 important events regarding religion happened, and without even a few events, our position in religion would look much different from today.

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