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### Christian Ideals Throughout Time

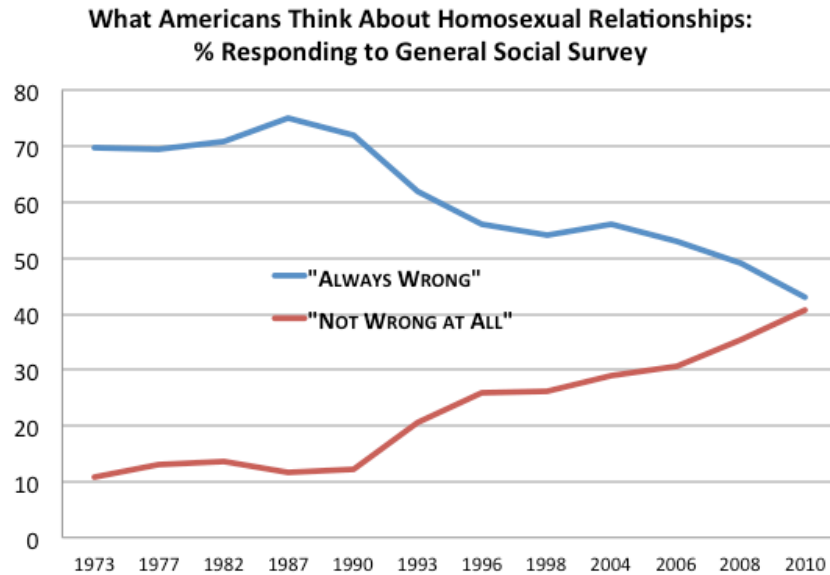
Over the years, Christianity has notably transformed for many people. There is a common misconception that all Christians share the same beliefs and politics. Yet, research proves otherwise, especially when it comes to the evangelical Christians and the liberal Christians. Same-sex marriage rights and abortion are currently causing tension between liberal Christians and evangelical Christians because of the ongoing debate of what upholds Christian ideals.

Within the past decade, America has seen an increase in debate about the legalization of same-sex marriage. On June 26<sup>th</sup> 2015, the United States became the twenty-first country to legalize same-sex marriage. This monumental moment has pleased many, yet left many feeling disappointed. Followers of the Christian faith have shown to both support and oppose this legalization. The Christians who are opposed to the idea of same-sex marriage argue that homosexuals will go to Hell because the Bible preaches that same-sex marriage stands against God's plan. Many believe that scripture from the Bible instills that homosexuality is a sin and that God created the man and the woman to be together. A verse from Mark 10:6-9 states, "At the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one" (Dawson). Verses similar to this teach that a man and woman are meant to be

together. Thus, many Evangelical Christians defend this standard and argue that homosexuality is unnatural and therefore a sin (Bernstein).

Traditionalist Christians have argued that gay marriage would ruin the establishment and tradition of conventional marriages for heterosexual people. One reason being that gay marriage would disregard the idea that marriage and childbirth have to be linked, which is a standard that a many Christians believe is important to sustain. Therefore, they argue that homosexuals having the right to adopt will directly go against what the Bible addresses (DeLaet). The Bible states in a verse from Deuteronomy 23:2 that, “No one born of a forbidden union may enter the assembly of the Lord. Even to the tenth generation, none of his descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord”. This verse claims that children born into unwed families are predestined to never go to Heaven. Evangelical Christians believe that if homosexual couples are able to adopt, it will cause an increase in the number of childbirths occurring out of wedlock, due to the increased number of homosexuals who would want to adopt since they cannot have children of their own (DeLaet). These evangelical beliefs of opposing homosexuality are strongly found throughout America (Bernstein). However, there is a large increase in the number of Christians who are choosing to support homosexuality as society as a whole moves towards an increase in acceptance.

The image below is a statistical representation of the response to homosexual relationships in America as of 2013. Since the early 1990’s there has been a steady incline in the acceptance of homosexuality, as well as a constant decline in disapproval towards homosexuality. Society as a whole is slowly reaching more of a liberal view in terms of gay marriage and many Christians are amid this percentage (Thompson).



(Source: Thompson, Derek. "The Rise of Gay Marriage and the Decline of Straight Marriage: Where's the Link?")

In recent years, Christian attitude towards various social controversies has been noticeably transforming from the traditional attitudes that many are accustomed to. Many Christians are speaking out about the debate over same-sex marriage rights. It is becoming more common to see many mainline Christian followers and organizations beginning to show their approval of the legalization same-sex marriage. The Unitarian Universalist Association is a liberal religious group of a Christian denomination that supports same-sex marriage. This group was founded in 1961 and since then it has been a large advocate for same-sex marriage because they view it as a civil right (DeLaet). Groups similar to the Unitarian Church are followers of the Christian faith; yet show their support in homosexuality.

A study conducted in 2014 provided research explaining why some Christian attitudes towards same-sex marriage are starkly changing in modern times. This research consisted of observing the types of social relationships held between Christians and gays

and lesbians. Results showed that Christians who were friends with gays and lesbians were more accepting to same-sex marriage than Christians who do not partake in social contact with gays and lesbians (Barker). While the social relationship status with homosexuals did have a large impact on Christian attitudes, these results were not consistent among Evangelical Christians. The study yielded that Evangelical Christians were very firm in their beliefs against same-sex marriage and maintained prejudice towards homosexuals. Many Evangelical Christians chose to refrain from socializing with any gay or lesbian person, because they do not want to accept a social relationship with someone who is committing the sin of homosexuality (Barker).

Prior to same-sex marriage becoming legal nationwide, many Christian advocates of same-sex marriage argued that both state governments and federal government were wrongly violating the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment (DeLaet). This clause states, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...” (DeLaet). They believed that this clause was being violated because heterosexual couples were able to enjoy the rights of receiving marriage licenses and benefits, but those of same-sex unions were denied those rights. This even applied to churches that sanctioned gay marriage, yet were still unable to wed a homosexual couple (DeLaet). “In particular, such discriminatory practices violate the “neutrality principle” by privileging a religious conception of marriage favored by some religious traditions but not universally shared by all mainline religions” (DeLaet).

Another controversy that is currently sweeping the nation is the debate over abortion. This controversy has also led to an increase in tension among the Evangelical

Christians and liberal Christians since abortion has become more common over time. The question that stems this debate is “Should abortion be illegal?” and the main source of this debate is religion (Kelly). Christian pro-life advocates have continued to put up a powerful fight to end abortion rights; however, it is still legal due to the large amount of support from pro-choice advocates and the funds provided to abortion clinics. While America may never reach a consensus, there has been a surprising increase in the percent of Christians who do support abortion.

Cities around America have been constantly facing riots, protests, and even shootings near abortion clinics that are led by pro-life groups. Scholarly research has explained the underlying reasons why Christian pro-life advocates organize these protests. The main reasons being that “abortion violates the sanctity of life and is a rebellion against God’s design” and “the appeal to the Catholic dogma” (Kelly). Evangelical Christians claim that abortion is murder and a sin. They believe that if a woman becomes pregnant she must complete the pregnancy and childbirth because that is what God intended for (Strickler).

In comparison to the evangelical Christians’ views on abortion, there are liberal Christians who argue in favor of pro-choice. Centuries ago, it was very rare to see a Christian show favor in abortion. However, in modern times, many liberal Christians are nonresistant to show their support in abortion. Research provides that they are pro-choice due to women’s rights, rape cases, and because legal abortion limits the hazards of at-home abortions.

Women’s Rights are one of the leading reasons people chose to be pro-choice. Pro-choice Liberal Christians have expressed their beliefs that women deserve the right to

control and decide what happens to their body. Planned Parenthood serves as an abortion clinic around the nation, giving women the right to control their pregnancy. Pregnancy as a result of rape is another reason many Christians have decided to be pro-choice (Strickler). Unfortunately, rape is not rare in America and many women have gotten pregnant after being raped. Being raped is extremely traumatizing for women and if a woman had a child as a result of rape she would be reminded of the event everyday. Due to this type of pregnancy, liberal Christians and many others believe that women should be allowed the choice of abortion if she becomes pregnant after being raped. The last main reason Christians have chosen to be pro-choice is for safety reasons. As long as abortion is legal, women can safely have the procedure done by a professional without the risk of getting hurt. If abortion were to be illegal, women would be more likely to attempt abortion at home without the knowledge, tools, or professionals. Performing at home abortions are dangerous and could be fatal (Strickler). Christians who are pro-choice believe that women deserve the rights to make the decision and protect their safety.

Change is inevitable, thus it should be expected to see modern Christian attitudes continue to shift along with the ever-changing society. While many evangelical Christians will continue to pass on their beliefs and teachings for generations to come, liberal Christians will continue to do the same. The tension will continue to come in between the evangelical Christians and the liberal Christians as long as controversies, such as same-sex marriage and abortion debates exist. While these two types of Christians share a similar religious background, their personal beliefs are what set them apart from each other.

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