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Christianity's Shift

Religion is an interesting topic of discussion, especially when it comes to Christianity. The center of Christianity started in Europe and the religion was passed onto the colonizers of America, which was mainly England. America then slowly grew to become one of the larger contributors to the Christian population in the world. Today America is the country with the most Christians in the world, but it is losing claim of this title. More and more Americans are beginning to claim that they are unaffiliated with a religion. This is not only the newer generations of Americans, but also some of the older ones. While the population of Christians is falling in America it is rising elsewhere. As more and more Americans claim to be unaffiliated to Christianity the more the global Christian population will continue to shift to countries in Africa, South America, and Asia.

There are a lot of contributing factors as to why American's are changing their affiliation with religion. An article written in 2009, *The Nones: Social Characteristics of the Religiously Unaffiliated* had the hypothesis that there were many influencing factors that lead people to become religious "nones". "Nones" being people who claim no religious affiliation with some of the factors that lead them to that choice being parental religion, spouse's religion, and religious attendance as a child. In the article they mentioned that national surveys taken in 2001 to 2004

placed at least 10 percent of Americans as religiously unaffiliated. This has grown to an even larger amount today. It seems as though the environment in which a person was raised greatly determines whether or not religion will be a part of their futures. Those who had parents that were not associated with a religion most likely have a spouse who does not care for religion. This kind of family probably doesn't attend church services with their child. The study found qualified support that these three factors greatly influence the religious future of an individual. Other than those three factors the study also saw that whether or not a person had kids or was married also influenced how likely they were to be religious in the future. These are just some of the interesting factors that influence one to become unaffiliated with religion. (Baker) Seeing as Christianity is the biggest religion in America these could be some of the factors causing the increase in those who are religiously unaffiliated.

In 2014 the United States remained home to more Christians than any other country, but over the past several years that number has declined by eight percent and the number of those who are religiously unaffiliated has gone up six percent. This drop in the Christian population is directly related to the growth of those who are religiously unaffiliated. The percentages are most likely not exactly the same because some Christians may have converted to other religions in the United States. In 2014 the percent of people who are religiously unaffiliated was 22.8 percent and in 2007 it was 16.1 percent. Noticed earlier was the survey that put over ten percent of Americans as religiously unaffiliated in 2001. This growing trend continues to be seen over many years and it shows no sign of stopping. One of the interesting parts of this trend is that the younger generations are a big part of those who are claiming to be unaffiliated. The median age of unaffiliated adults was 36 in 2014, which is a drop from 38 in 2007. Comparatively the median age for both Protestant and Catholic adults have both risen over the past seven years.

This shows that the younger generations are those claiming to be unaffiliated. These younger generations are not only replacing the older generations of Christian followers. Not many, but some of the older generations are also joining the younger ones and becoming religiously unaffiliated. Both the younger generation and the older generation are a part of a bigger statistic, which is that 85 percent of adults in America were raised as Christians. Now about 25 percent of those adults do not identify with Christianity and they make up 19.2 percent of adults in America. It is clear that America is becoming less Christian and less religious as a whole, so what does this mean for Christianity? These trends along with the factors that are leading people to become religiously unaffiliated will continue as these unaffiliated people will raise their families without Christianity. (America's) This will lead to more generations of nonreligious people that will replace older generations, some of which are already converting. The loss of Christians in the U.S will eventually lead to it losing its title of remaining home to more Christians than any other country.

Some of the global Christian population is shifting to countries in Africa as more people in America claim to be unaffiliated. Muslims were the major religious group in Africa a century ago, as there were four times more Muslims than Christians. Over the past 50 years this has changed as Christianity has taken over and now is growing at around 2.4 percent per year. (Bonk) Christianity has grown in Africa over other religions due to how translatable the faith is. It can engage the many different cultures of the world, which allows it to multiply in places such as Africa. Since there is no holy city for Christianity or any sacred sites for it, like those of Islam, its center is prone to move. It is not locked down into only one position and that is what is being seen now. Africa is one of the places it is transitioning to as many people have already begun following the religion. (Nakah) By the year 2050 Africa is predicted to have 38 percent of the

world's Christians and only 10 percent of the world's Christians will be living in North America. Along with this 5 out of 10 countries in the top 10 Christian populations in the world in 2050 are predicted to be from Africa. These countries will be Tanzania, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Uganda, and The Democratic Republic of Congo. Some of this predicted growth in Africa is due to the population growth that the continent as a whole has. Their fertility rates are higher than any other continent and these kids will become Christians as they will be raised by their parents who are already converted to the religion. This is a big factor, but religious switching in America is also playing a role. (Masci) As the amount in Christians in the U.S continues to shrink the higher the percentage of Christians there will be in countries in Africa and other countries around the world.

Another continent that has had growth in Christianity is Asia, especially in China. China today has a large amount of Protestants, which is a denomination of Christianity. In 1976 there was around 1.5 million Protestants and that number of followers continued to grow exponentially. This was due to the reopening of China in 1978 along with allowing limited religious freedom in 1982. In 2014, China had 24 million of its 1.35 billion people belonging to the Protestant Church. This is only the Protestant population of China, "A researcher from Renmin University in Beijing publicly gave the number of almost 90 million Christians in China including the house church members." (Kaiser) House Church members being people who are a part of the unofficial Christian church networks in China. These members either do not wish to be associated with the main church or they are associated, but remain separate. Despite this they are recognized as part of the Christian population in China. Overall there has been a lot of Christian growth in China within in the last 35 years. Since America is losing its Christians this is another one of the places where the global population is shifting due to people in China taking to the religion.

While the Protestant denomination of Christianity may be growing in China another denomination has become very popular in South America. It is predicted that in the year 2050 half of the world's Catholics will have originated from Latin America. This group of Christians will continue to grow as already 71 percent of Latin America's population is considered Catholic. Christianity is involved deeply in the public life of Latin Americans. In the 21st century it is expected for politics and the Church to be closely associated. Besides politics Christianity will find its way into the social issues and education system in Latin America. Latin America already contains an impressive amount of Catholics and that amount will continue to grow over the next few decades, which will allow for the concentration of Catholics there to be five times higher than any other place in the world. (Holcová) Catholicism will continue these trends in South America due to its ability to link itself to the culture of these countries. By getting involved in the way the government is run and other aspects of social life it is proving that it will continue to grow. It is only getting more popular.

America is losing its religiousness as a whole, with most of that being from Christianity. The global population of Christians in the world used to be located in Europe and America. They were at the top of the list, but now that is all changing. America is losing a faith that has been extremely popular here as more people more to become religiously unaffiliated. This is not the only factor that is causing the shift of the Christian population, but it certainly isn't keeping it here in America. Countries in Africa are taking over as the leaders of Christianity and who knows what this religion may shift to as it becomes less of America's concern. The denominations of Christianity growing in South America and Asia are also shifting where in the world Christians are found. The center of Christianity will shift to these other countries in the near future due partially to the decreasing amount of Christians in America.

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