

World Christian Trends 2005
IFMA/EFMA, St. Louis, September 2004
Todd M. Johnson
Center for the Study of Global Christianity, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
www.globalchristianity.org

Two contrasting views of church membership censuses

Objective view of AD 2000?

“religious believers are likely to be found only in small sects, huddled together to resist a worldwide secular culture”

Peter Berger (1968) *New York Times*

Biased view of AD 2000?

“350 million Christians in Africa”

David Barrett (1970) *International Review of Mission*

Is it “Exaggerated” and “Notoriously unreliable”

Darrell Huff’s book *How to lie with statistics*

Or is it a “thorough and reliable annual church census”

Vatican’s *Annuario Pontificio* listing every Catholic diocese

Research cycle of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity

Collection

Yearbooks, censuses, books, informants, Internet

Analysis

Data entry, reconciliation of data, composite indices

Organization

Library, filing cabinets, maps, electronic index

Publication

World Christian Encyclopedia, *World Christian Trends*, World Christian Database, articles

Consultation

Mission agencies, religion scholars, journalists, conferences

Innumeracy is a problem

Take for example the Left Behind Series which claims that approx. 140 million will be raptured but later says that all unborn children and children under the age of accountability will be raptured

Let’s do the math!

100 million unborn children

605 million under the age of 5

1.8 billion under the age of 15

Between 200 and 600 million committed Christians

WHOOOPS. No room for the authors!

Why pursue Christian statistics?

Every year the churches’ hold a megacensus costing \$1.1 billion, sending out 10 million questionnaires in 3,000 languages covering 180 religious subjects

This includes massive church surveys such as *Annuario Pontificio* but also detailed country studies done by Evangelical Alliances and others. In addition over half of the world’s governments include a question on religion in their decennial censuses.

But why do we need analysis? (Here I introduce a parallel with financial accounting)

Bookkeeping:

“recording financial transactions”

Accounting:

“The system of classifying and summarizing financial transactions and analyzing, verifying and reporting the results”

One example I recently found:

“There are 2.3 million Episcopalians in the United States, compared to 62 million Roman Catholics and 16 million Southern Baptists. (Note: the numbers game is a dicey one in religion reporting because churches have different standards for membership, but you get the idea.)”

--USC online, June 2004

The need for accounting is clear in that Southern Baptists do not count children and infants but the other two traditions do. Therefore, without adjustments, the numbers are not comparable.

Two other examples

Calculating where all the Palestinian Christians in the world are located (Highest concentration: Sydney)
 How many churches are there in Cambodia? I uncovered the Israelite Tree of Life group (Cambodians evangelized in Minneapolis by a Messianic Jewish group which then planted 12 churches in Phnom Pehn)

Global Religious Demographics

Religion	Median Age	Life	Urban Pct	Under15 Pct
Christians	29	68	64	27
Evangelicals	26	64	59	32
Atheists	33	72	48	22
Buddhists	31	72	43	24
Ethnoreligionists	24	59	39	34
Hindus	24	65	29	32
Muslims	23	65	45	35
Nonreligious	33	72	49	22
Non-Christians	27	68	42	29

Global Religious Demographics

Religion	Floor Area	HDI	Male Lit	Female Lit	GNP pc
Christians	23	73	88	81	\$8,224
Evangelicals	22	64	82	72	\$8,038
Atheists	15	67	92	79	\$3,544
Buddhists	17	69	92	82	\$8,951
Ethnoreligionists	11	48	75	56	\$998
Hindus	12	45	65	38	\$441
Muslims	11	54	68	48	\$1,655
Nonreligious	16	68	91	78	\$4,176
Non-Christians	13	58	78	60	\$2,907

Collaboration

We have one thousand scholars and informants around the world helping us

Organization

We have one million documents dating back to 1950

Publications

World Christian Encyclopedia, World Christian Trends

Seven signposts of God’s initiative in our day

All figures mid-2005 unless otherwise noted

Signpost #1

The size, diversity, and vitality of global Christianity

Christians now form 39,000 denominations ranging in size from millions to less than 100 members, these are listed for each of the world’s 238 countries in the World Christian Database

These can be grouped into 6 major ecclesiastical megablocs

Roman Catholics	1,119 million
Independents	427 million
Protestants	376 million
Orthodox	220 million
Anglicans	80 million
Marginal	34 million

The fastest growing are the Independents

A huge new Christian nonconfessional megabloc, the Independents/Post-denominationalists, is growing rapidly and numbers 20% of all Christians

China—fastest Christian expansion ever with 10,000 new converts every day

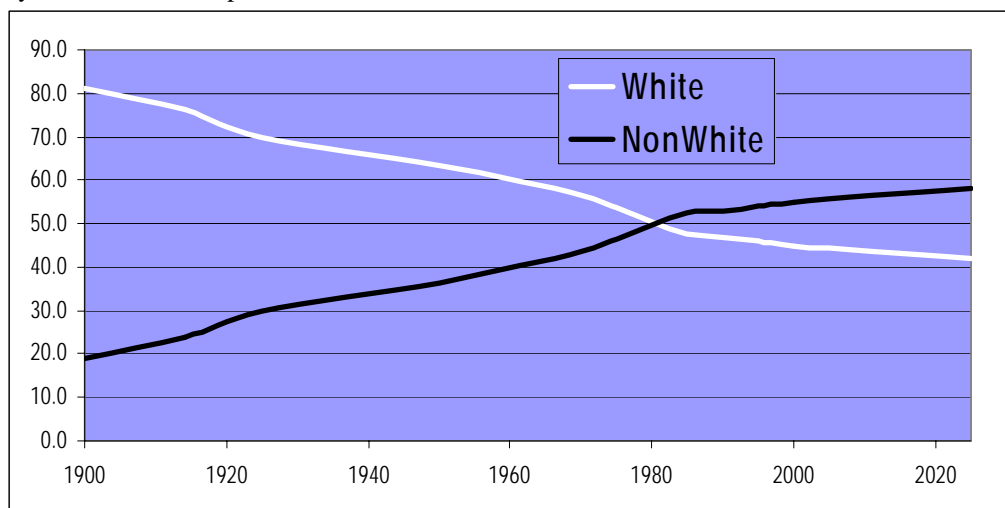
Documentation on the house churches, Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, Brother Yun, *The Heavenly Man*, Hattaway, *Back to Jerusalem*

Robust documentation about NBBCs and from NBBCs (12 million counted as both Hindus and Christians) Hofer, *Churchless Christianity*, Bharati, *Living Water and Indian Bowl*

Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*

In 1900 81% of all Christians were White

By 2005 this will drop to 43%



Mapping the Southern Trajectory of Global Christianity

See Johnson and Chung in *International Review of Mission*, April 2004 issue for map and graph

Southern “Christianities”

22,500 denominations

6,000 peoples

10,000 languages

Northern “Christianities”

11,300 denominations

3,000 peoples

3,500 languages

Largest Christian Countries

2005	<i>Xns millions</i>	2025	<i>millions</i>	2050	<i>millions</i>
USA	252	USA	295	USA	329
Brazil	167	Brazil	193	China	218
China	111	China	173	Brazil	202
Mexico	102	Mexico	123	DRC	145
Russia	85	India	107	India	137
Phil	74	Phil	97	Mexico	131
India	68	Nigeria	95	Nigeria	130
Germ	62	DRC	91	Phil	112
Nigeria	61	Russia	85	Ethiopia	104
DRC	53	Ethiopia	67	Uganda	95

Unique role for Northern Christians in the future of global Christianity

1. Engaging culture on a missiological, philosophical, theological, and ecclesiastical level
2. Bioethics and genetics
3. Financial accountability
4. Reaching postmodern youth
5. Radical contextualization beyond Christianity
6. Members of multinational churches and missions
7. Science and theology
8. Pilgrimage sites
9. Scholarship on pre-modern Christianity

The emerging next Christianities

Unreached peoples: 13,000 cultures not yet represented among the “ethne” of Matthew 28

Signpost #2

The massive evangelistic enterprise of global Christianity

Broadcasting

Regular listeners to Christian programs over secular or religious radio/TV stations rose from 22% of the world in 1980 to 30% in 2000

Scripture Distribution

Non-Christian countries have been found to have 227 million Bibles in place in their midst, more than needed to serve all Christians but poorly distributed

Martyrdom

70 million Christians have been martyred since Christ

The 5 Most Dangerous Vocations

- Bishops
- Evangelists
- Catechists
- Colporteurs
- Foreign Missionaries

Evangelization

There is enough evangelism in the world today for every person to hear a one hour presentation of the gospel every other day all year long

Signpost #3

The challenge of managing resources

Christian Finance

78 countries each have Great Commission Christians whose personal incomes exceed US\$1 billion a year

Ecclesiastical Crime

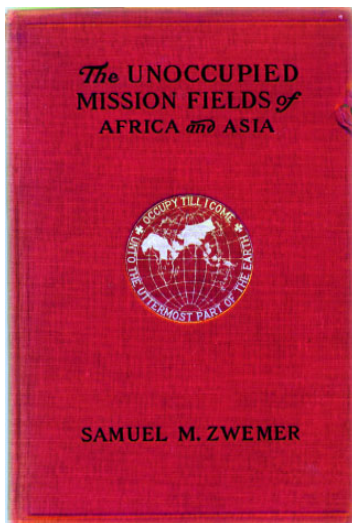
Emboldened by lax procedures, trusted church treasurers are embezzling each year \$21 billion out of church funds, but only 5% ever get found out
Annual church embezzlements by top custodians exceed the entire cost of all foreign missions worldwide

Signpost #4

The continuing challenge of the unfinished task

20th century global plans

- 1900 The evangelization of the world in this generation
- 1908 The modern crusade
- 1910 The whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world
- 1912 Reaching every home
- 1914 Inauguration of the Kingdom of God on earth
- 1929 Each one teach one
- 1930 Bringing Christ to the nations
- 1934 Evangelize to a finish to bring back the king
- 1943 Into all the world
- 1946 Complete Christ's Commission
- 1950 Help open paths to evangelize
- 1956 The gospel to every creature
- 1957 Global conquest
- 1959 Two thousand tongues to go
- 1963 The master plan of evangelism
- 1967 Crusade for world revival
- 1974 Let the earth hear his voice
- 1976 Bold Mission Thrust
- 1980 A Church for Every People by the Year 2000
- 1984 Strategy to Every People
- 1986 One million native missionaries
- 1990 Decade of Evangelization



Over 90% of all Christian evangelism is aimed at other Christians and does not reach non-Christians

Signpost #5

The responsiveness of the least reached peoples

Per hour of ministry, the 5 megapeoples most responsive to Christianity, Christ, and the gospel are:

Khandeshi
Awadhi
Magadhi
Bai
Berar Marathi

Signpost #6

The suitability of postmodern youth for world mission

Conference: "Out of the Christian Ghetto: French Roast Tall Latte Evangelism in a Decaffeinated, Nonfat, Post-Christian World"

Paul Hiebert, *Missiological Implications of Epistemological Shifts: Affirming Truth in a Modern/Postmodern World*

A new vocabulary emerges
Critical realism
Epistemological humility
Generous orthodoxy
Chastened rationality
Faithful uncertainty
Non-modern metanarrative

"It is one thing to have absolute truth; quite another to understand it absolutely."
Millard Erickson

The Three Pigs by David Wiesner (a postmodern version)

Tools for mission from postmodernity
Celebration of the world's cultures
Openness to dialogue with and learn from other cultures and religions
Desire for community
Comfortable with uncertainty and doubt
No need to have all the answers

Globalization

That's the value of travel kids... (McDonalds, Starbucks, Gap in every country)

Tribalism

Preschool African-American asks for a flesh colored crayon and gets a whole stack of colors

Signpost #7

The emerging face of Jesus

Literature

Books about Jesus in today's libraries number 175,000 different titles in 500 languages, increasing by 4 newly published every day

A review of the many faces of Jesus from Christian history and traditions
Each face offers a differing cultural perspective of Jesus
None of us has an unhindered view of Jesus
Only when all peoples behold his face will we see his face clearly
The missing faces of Jesus belong to those peoples not yet reached with the gospel