Throughout 2017, Protestants around the world will celebrate five hundred years of their history, symbolically springing from Martin Luther nailing his ninety-five theses to the door of the Wittenberg Church in October 1517. Today, different types of churches exist within Protestantism, including Anglican, Baptist, Brethren, Church of Christ, Congregational, Disciples, Evangelical, Friends (Quakers), Lutheran, Mennonite, Moravian, Pentecostal, and Reformed/Presbyterian.

Although for several centuries the Protestant movement was based in Europe, then North America, it eventually expanded out of its Western cultural homelands and has become a global movement with a wide variety of denominations, now well over 11,000. The World Christian Database reports than in 2017, there are 56 million Protestants found in nearly all the world’s 234 countries, with Africa home to 40% of Protestants. We project that by 2040, half of all Protestants will live in Africa.
Christian Martyrdom in the Headlines

In December 2016, Pope Francis, along with various news organizations including Fox News and Religion News Service, reported on the persecution of Christians around the world and cited our figure of 90,000 Christian martyrs in 2016. The Center for the Study of Global Christianity has done extensive research on Christian martyrdom, both historical and contemporary. We estimate that between 2005 and 2015 there were 900,000 Christian martyrs worldwide—an average of 90,000 per year. We published our methodology and findings in the journal Society under the title, "Christian Martyrdom as a Pervasive Phenomenon," which is available upon request by emailing info@globalchristianity.org.

We take into consideration historical, sociological, and theological arguments in quantifying Christian martyrdom throughout time. Our definition of “martyr” highlights two important aspects: (1) the motivation of the killed rather than the killer; and (2) the inclusion of Christians who have died as a result of mass killings and genocides. Martyrdom is a broad-based phenomenon not limited to state persecution that profoundly affects Christians experiencing civil war, genocide, and other conflicts. Our estimate of 90,000 appears in our annual Status of Global Christianity 2017 table, available for free download at www.globalchristianity.org/. For any questions regarding how we quantify Christian martyrdom, please contact us at info@globalchristianity.org.

Coming Soon: Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa

This first reference volume of the Edinburgh Companions to Global Christianity series covers every country in Sub-Saharan Africa, offering reliable statistical and demographic information, as well as original interpretive essays by African scholars and practitioners. It maps patterns of growth and decline, assesses major traditions and movements, analyzes key themes, and examines current trends in each of the major Christian traditions. The essays also explore faith and culture, worship and spirituality, theology, social and political engagement, mission and evangelism, religious freedom, inter-faith relations, slavery, anthropology of evil, and migration. Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa will be published in June 2017 in the United States.

Find out more at www.edinburghuniversitypress.com.

Our research is used worldwide by churches, mission agencies, NGOs, and international media outlets. Your support makes this research possible. Will you consider supporting quality research on global Christianity?

Our goal is to raise $100K this year toward the World Christian Encyclopedia.

To give online, please visit http://worldchristianresearch.org/support/

To give via check, please make it payable to “World Christian Research” and send to Todd Johnson, Treasurer World Christian Research 130 Essex Street, #228 South Hamilton, MA 01982
Todd at SHIFT Conference in Thailand

In October 2016, CSGC Director Todd Johnson spoke at Bangkok Christian College to a group of 1,000 Thai Christian leaders and students around the theme “Shift”. Dr. Johnson gave three talks describing the dramatic changes in global Christianity over the past 100 years, particularly the demographic shift of Christianity from its predominantly European and North America base (80% of all Christians) in 1910 to the present majority of Africans, Asian, Latin Americans, and Pacific Islanders (62%). He also outlined how migration and conversion impact the growth of Christianity and what influence Bible translation has had in recent years. The response he received from Thai Christians was how refreshing it is to be a part of a global community. One week later he gave the same talks to 500 church leaders in Chiang Mai where he is spending this academic year on sabbatical.

Dissertation on David Barrett & Quantification of World Christianity

CSGC Assistant Director Gina Zurlo wraps up her Ph.D. dissertation work this semester after years of diligent, careful research on the role of quantification in the history of Christian mission through the lens of David B. Barrett (1927–2011), author of the World Christian Encyclopedia.

The World Christian Encyclopedia (1982) presented, for the first time, a comprehensive quantitative assessment of all branches of Christianity, portraying a diverse and fragmented world Christianity, unified by self-identification in the church.

Barrett re-defined “world Christianity” in a post-colonial world. Throughout the history of mission, religious statistics served as measurements of success or failure as well as motivation for starting new missions. Demand for religious statistics increased in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with the expansion of the modern missionary movement and rise of popular writing on missions. Furthermore, the history of American sociology had roots in “Christian sociology”—researchers involved in the missionary enterprise. American sociology in the 1960s—when Barrett received his Ph.D. in religion from Columbia University—was shaped by the history of missionaries who produced social scientific research.

Barrett’s location in Nairobi, Kenya, with the Church Missionary Society during the rise of African nationalism and decolonization colored his perspective on world Christianity. His study of African independent Christianity (AIC) was important for his transition from colonialism and foundational to the production of the Encyclopedia. Much like the AICs he studied, Barrett broke off from the missionary establishment and threw his support behind “heretical” African groups. Barrett’s unique mixture of education, professional background, and geographical location in Africa helped him develop a new, post-colonial understanding of world Christianity. Rather than seeing the decline of religion, Barrett projected its growth and expansion. His findings challenged previous estimates for the size and scope of the world Christian movement.

NOTABLE CITATIONS

- Christians in Pakistan: 900,000 Christians martyred in last 10 years
- Religion News Service: 80 percent of Hispanics are Catholic
- Mennonite World Review: Christians targeted for their non-violence
- Covenant Companion: Re-imagine world mission

PUBLICATIONS


ABOUT US

The Center for the Study of Global Christianity is an academic research center that monitors worldwide demographic trends in Christianity, including outreach and mission. We provide a comprehensive collection of information on the past, present, and future of Christianity in every country of the world. Our data and publications help churches, mission agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to be more strategic, thoughtful, and sensitive to local contexts.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL 5–6  
Todd presenting in Surabaya, Indonesia on Global Christianity

APRIL 10–14  
Todd presenting in Seoul, South Korea on Global Christianity

APRIL 17–21  
Todd presenting in Taipei, Taiwan on Global Christianity

APRIL 24–27  
Todd presenting in Chiang Mai, Thailand on Global Christianity

JULY 4–7  
Todd presenting in Lausanne, Switzerland on Pentecostalism

OCTOBER 2–5  
CSGC staff speaking at Missions Emphasis Week at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

OCTOBER 13—15  
Gina presenting at the annual meeting of the Society of the Scientific Study of Religion in Washington, DC.