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”

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

WHOOPS. 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

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

Global Religious Demographics

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

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) Hoefer, 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

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

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

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