



Christianity in Global Context: Trends and Statistics

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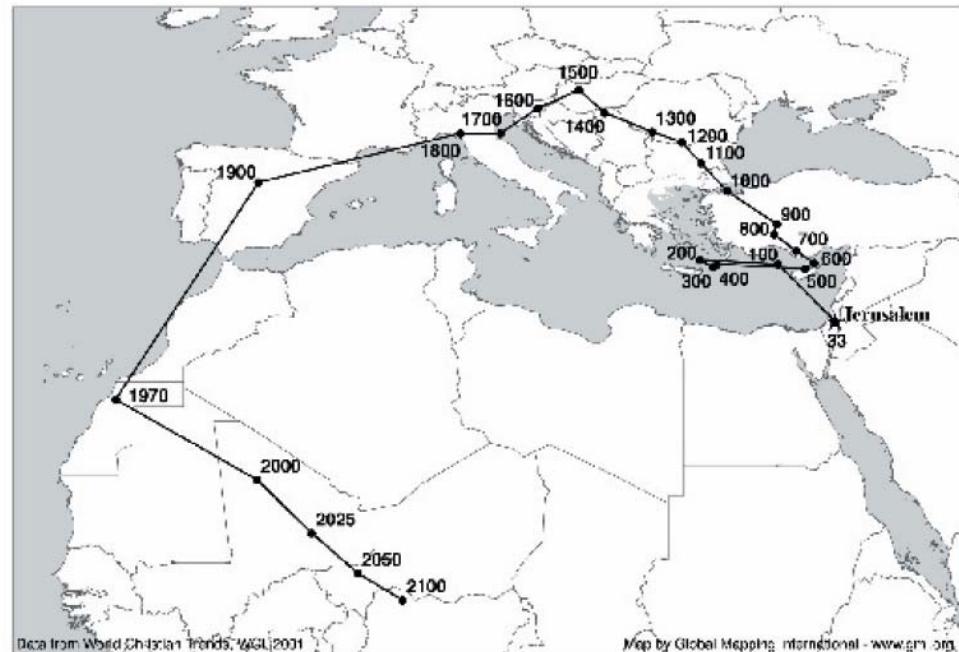
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Over the past 100 years, Christianity has experienced a profound southern shift in its geographical center of gravity. Whereas in 1900 over 80% of all Christians lived in Europe and Northern America, by 2005 this proportion had fallen to under 40%, and will likely fall below 30% before 2050. Table 1 shows the meteoric rise of Christianity in the South and its corresponding decline in the North.

Table 2 illustrates this major shift by highlighting the cultural traditions of Christianity. Europeans (including Americans of European descent), in the vast majority one hundred years ago, are now in the minority. Today, Africans, Asians and Latin Americans are more typical representatives of Christianity than Americans or Europeans. Table 3 lists the top 10 Christian countries by size. In 1900, with the exception of Brazil, the top 10 were all Western countries; by 2050, only the U.S. will make the list. Table 4 lists the top 10 Muslim countries for the same dates. It is interesting to note that, beginning in 2005, India and Nigeria are common to both lists.

What might it mean for the future of Christianity that its center of gravity continues to move south and east? Three key factors bear watching: (1) whether Southern Christians will challenge Northern Christianity's 1,000-year dominance in theology and ecclesiology by producing their own reflections and practices, hearkening back to the earliest Christian centuries when they were in the majority; (2) whether the dominant languages of Christianity will continue to shift south (already by 1980, Spanish was the leading language of church membership in the world, and Chinese, Hindi, and Swahili are increasingly important languages of Christianity); and (3) whether the closer geographic proximity between Christians and Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists will on balance result in greater conflict or dialogue. With all three factors, the central question remains: "How well will the new global Christianity navigate its increasingly diverse composition and southern majority?"

Map 1: Trajectory of the Statistical Center of Global Christianity, AD 33-2100



From Todd M. Johnson and Sun Young Chung, "Tracking Global Christianity's Statistical Centre of Gravity, AD 33-AD 2100," *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 93, No. 369 (April 2004), pp. 166-181.

Table 1. Christians by UN region, 1900 to 2050

	1900			1970			2005			2025			2050		
	Pop (millions)	% Xn	% of all Xns	Pop (millions)	% Xn	% of all Xns	Pop (millions)	% Xn	% of all Xns	Pop (millions)	% Xn	% of all Xns	Pop (millions)	% Xn	% of all Xns
Africa	10	9	2	143	40	12	411	46	19	621	48	24	899	50	29
Asia	22	2	4	101	5	8	351	9	17	503	11	19	621	12	20
Europe	381	95	68	492	75	40	553	76	26	535	77	20	480	76	16
Latin America	62	95	11	269	95	22	517	93	24	629	92	24	694	90	22
Northern America	79	97	14	212	91	17	275	83	13	306	78	12	356	80	12
Oceania	5	78	1	18	93	1	26	80	1	30	76	1	34	73	1
Total	558	35	100	1,234	33	100	2,134	33	100	2,626	33	100	3,083	35	100

Table 2. Global population and Christians by major cultural tradition, 1900 and 2005

Cultural tradition	1900				2005			
	Population (millions)	% world pop	Christians (millions)	% of all Christians	Population (millions)	% world pop	Christians (millions)	% of all Christians
AFRICAN (Bantu, Nilotic, Sudanic)	68	4	2	*	591	9	320	16
AFRO-AMERICAN (USA Black, Creole)	22	2	23	4	148	2	128	6
ASIAN (Chinese, Indo-Malay, Korean)	684	42	35	6	2,437	38	369	18
EUROPEAN (Caucasian, Germanic, Slav)	441	27	440	79	938	15	685	34
INDO-IRANIAN (Dravidian, Iranian, North Indian)	302	19	7	1	1,528	24	79	4
LATIN AMERICAN (Mestizo, Amerindian)	48	3	44	8	390	6	362	18
MIDDLE EASTERN (Arab, Berber, Ethiopic)	52	3	9	2	404	6	63	3
OCEANIC (Fijian, Melanesian, Papuan)	3	*	1	*	17	*	14	1
WORLD POPULATION	1,620	100	562	100	6,454	100	2,020	100

Table 3. Top 10 Christian countries, 1900 to 2050

1900		1970		2005		2025		2050	
Country	Christians (millions)	Country	Christians (millions)	Country	Christians (millions)	Country	Christians (millions)	Country	Christians (millions)
USA	73	USA	191	USA	251	USA	280	USA	329
Russia	62	Brazil	92	Brazil	167	Brazil	193	China	218
Germany	42	Germany	70	China	111	China	174	Brazil	202
France	41	Russia	50	Mexico	102	Mexico	123	Congo-Zaire	145
Britain	37	Mexico	50	Russia	84	India	107	India	137
Italy	33	Britain	48	Philippines	74	Philippines	96	Mexico	131
Ukraine	29	Italy	48	India	68	Nigeria	95	Nigeria	130
Poland	22	France	43	Germany	62	Congo-Zaire	91	Philippines	112
Spain	19	Philippines	34	Nigeria	61	Russia	85	Ethiopia	104
Brazil	17	Spain	33	Congo-Zaire	53	Ethiopia	67	Uganda	95

Table 4. Top 10 Muslim countries, 1900 to 2050

1900		1970		2005		2025		2050	
Country	Muslims (millions)	Country	Muslims (millions)	Country	Muslims (millions)	Country	Muslims (millions)	Country	Muslims (millions)
India	32	India	63	Pakistan	155	Pakistan	238	Pakistan	332
China	24	Pakistan	60	India	134	Bangladesh	185	Bangladesh	228
Pakistan	21	Bangladesh	54	Bangladesh	133	India	167	India	188
Bangladesh	19	Indonesia	51	Indonesia	122	Indonesia	138	Indonesia	141
Indonesia	16	Turkey	36	Turkey	71	Egypt	89	Nigeria	111
Turkey	11	Egypt	29	Iran	68	Iran	87	Egypt	110
Iran	10	Iran	28	Egypt	64	Turkey	86	Iran	101
Egypt	9	China	21	Nigeria	55	Nigeria	82	Turkey	95
Russia	7	Nigeria	21	Algeria	32	Afghanistan	44	Yemen	84
Afghanistan	5	Morocco	15	Morocco	31	Yemen	43	Afghanistan	67

Note: Figures may not sum to the total due to rounding. Source: World Christian Database (www.worldchristiandatabase.org), following the methodology of the World Christian Encyclopedia, 2nd ed. (2001) and World Christian Trends (2001).