



Methodology of the *World Christian Database*

Adapted from Todd M. Johnson and Brian J. Grim, *The World's Religions in Figures: An Introduction to International Religious Demography* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013) and David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Trends* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001).

The *World Christian Database* includes detailed information on 41,000 Christian denominations and on religions in every country of the world. Extensive data are available on 234 countries and 13,000 ethno-linguistic peoples, as well as on 5,000 cities and 3,000 provinces. This extraordinary database is an invaluable reference tool for professionals, scholars, students, agencies, health organizations, and news media. Information is readily available on religious activities, growth rates, religious literature, worker activity, and demographics. Additional data are included concerning population, health, education, languages, and communication. All this information makes the *WCD* an invaluable resource for anyone interested in Christian and religious demography and the history of Christianity. Thousands of sources are evaluated and reviewed on a weekly basis by a professional staff dedicated to expanding and updating the *WCD*, and the database is updated quarterly. There is no other resource completely focused on providing global statistics on World Christianity today.

The right to profess one's choice

This methodology takes as its starting-point the United Nations 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance." Since its promulgation, this group of phrases has been incorporated into the state constitutions of a large number of countries across the world. This fundamental right also includes the right to claim the religion of one's choice, and the right to be called a follower of that religion and to be enumerated as such. The section on religious freedom in the constitutions of very many nations uses the exact words of the Universal Declaration, and many countries instruct their census personnel to observe this principle. Public declaration must therefore be taken seriously when endeavoring to survey the extent of religious and non-religious affiliation around the world.

Religious demography

The origins of the field of religious demography lie in the church censuses conducted in most European societies. For many years and in many countries, churches produced the most complete censuses of the population. They achieved this largely by

recording baptisms and funerals. These data, however, were seen not as referring to specific religious communities, but rather to the larger homogenous societies. With the decline of national churches in Europe beginning in the nineteenth and continuing into the twentieth century, secular governments began tracking births and deaths, eventually replacing churches as the main bodies collecting detailed information on human populations. Although thousands of sources for international religious demography are available, ranging from censuses and demographic surveys to statistics collected and reported by religious groups themselves, little has been done by scholars in religion, sociology, or other disciplines to collect, collate, and analyze these data over the past decades.

Sources

Data for religious demography fall broadly under 13 headings:

1. Censuses in which a religious question is asked

In the twentieth century, approximately half the world's countries asked a question related to religion in their official national population censuses. Since 1990, however, this number has been declining as developing countries have dropped the question, deeming it too expensive (in many countries each question in a census costs well over 1 million U.S. dollars), uninteresting, or controversial. As a result, some countries that historically included a religion question have not included the question in their censuses since 1990. National censuses are the best starting point for the identification of religious adherents, because they generally cover the entire population.

2. Censuses in which an ethnicity or language question is asked

In the absence of a question on religion, another helpful piece of information from a census is ethnicity or language. This is especially true when a particular ethnic group can be equated with a particular religion. For example, over 99% of Somalis are Muslim, so the number of Somalis in, say, Sweden is an indication of a part of the Muslim community there. Similarly, a question that asks for country of birth can use useful. If the answer is "Nepal" there is a significant chance that the individual or community is Hindu. In each of these cases the assumption is made (if there is no further information) that the religion of the transplanted ethnic or linguistic community is the same as that in the home country.

3. Surveys and polls

In the absence of census data on religion, large-scale demographic surveys, such as the MEASURE (Monitoring and Evaluation to Assess and Use Results) Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), often include a question about the respondent's religious affiliation. In some instances, demographic surveys by groups such as UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) include a religious affiliation question. Demographic surveys, though less comprehensive than a national census, have several advantages over other types of general population surveys and polls. Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) are highly regarded by demographers and social scientists, and provide valuable nationally representative data on religion. Surveys can also be commissioned in light of a dearth of data on a particular subject and results can be used to search for correlations between different variables.

4. Scholarly monographs

Every year, scholars publish hundreds of monographs on particular religions or religions in particular countries or regions. Such monographs differ from other sources in that they attempt to provide an overall profile of religion in an area or country, bringing to light local quantitative data sources as well as qualitative information that provides layers of context and background.

5. Religion statistics in yearbooks and handbooks

Religious communities keep track of their members, using everything from simple lists to elaborate membership reports. The most detailed data collection and analysis is undertaken each year by some 43,000 Christian denominations and their 4.7 million constituent churches and congregations of believers. The latter invest over 1.1 billion USD annually for a massive, decentralized, and largely uncoordinated global census of Christians. In sum, they send out around 10 million printed questionnaires in 3,000 different languages, covering 180 major religious subjects reporting on 2,000 socio-religious variables. This collection of data provides a year-by-year snapshot of the progress or decline of Christianity's diverse movements, offering an enormous body of data from which researchers can track trends and make projections.¹ Statistics collected by religious communities often enable researchers to distinguish between two categories of religionists—practicing and non-practicing—based on whether or not they take part in the ongoing organized life of the religion.

6. Governmental statistical reports

Governments often collect statistics on religion beyond those collected in censuses, such as the *Statistical Book of Norway* (<http://www.ssb.no/en/yearbook/>) and the U.S. State Department's religious freedom reports.

7. Questionnaires and reports from collaborators

Researchers sometimes initiate queries related to religious demography that result in brief reports. Most of these are never published but are available in the headquarters or national study centers of many religious groups or denominations.

8. Field surveys and interviews

For the past fifty years, scholars have visited virtually every country in the world to conduct interviews with religionists. Most of these are never published but, once again, are available in private collections in many countries of the world.

9. Correspondence with national informants

Scholars and others who have extensive knowledge of a particular religious community can be a source of critical information on religious demographics. Correspondence with informants is often most helpful when trying to clear up discrepancies in existing data, such

¹ One attempt to organize a variety of source material for researchers is the website www.adherents.com, which offers thousands of figures for adherents of hundreds of religions. However, there is no attempt by its organizers to reconcile the numerous contradictions in the source material. Nonetheless, it offers an invaluable look at the amount of data researchers have at their disposal.

as when figures reported by government entities and those of religious communities disagree significantly; when no recent data have been collected, for example, as a result of ongoing political or economic instability; or when political or social pressures inhibit collection or publication of data on religions, especially minority religions.

10. Unpublished documentation

These documents are collected in the field and include reports, memoranda, facsimiles, photocopies, photographs, maps, statistical summaries, and historical documents.

11. Encyclopedias, dictionaries, and directories of religions

Numerous encyclopedias, dictionaries, and directories describing religions in different countries are available as secondary sources. Unlike yearbooks, these compilations are not normally the products of a single religious community or church.

12. Print and web-based contemporary descriptions of religions

There are numerous descriptions of religious communities around the world that are produced for a particular purpose (often a conference or meeting) that are circulated but never published. In more recent years, web sites related to religion have proliferated.

13. Dissertations and theses on religion

Unpublished theses and dissertations often contain tables, charts, and graphs on religious demographics, either from primary sources listed above or from original research done for the dissertation itself. These can be searched by subject and (in cases where they have been scanned) by key words. Often such searches can be performed via the Internet.

Affiliation

There are at least three different perspectives on what it means to be a Christian: professing Christians, affiliated Christians, and practicing Christians. Utilizing the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a foundation, “professing Christians” means all those who profess to be Christians in government censuses or public-opinion polls; that is, who declare or identify themselves as Christians, who say “I am a Christian” or “We are Christians” when asked the question “What is your religion?”

However, not all those who profess to be Christians are affiliated to organized churches and denominations. Therefore, “affiliated Christians” are those known to the churches or known to the clergy (usually by names and addresses) and claimed in their statistics, i.e., those enrolled on the churches’ books or records, with totals that can be substantiated. This usually means all known baptized Christians and their children, and other adherents; it is sometimes termed the total Christian community (because affiliated Christians are those who are not primarily individual Christians but who primarily belong to the corporate community of Christ), or inclusive membership (because affiliated Christians are church members). This definition of “Christians” is what the churches usually mean by the term (and thus the *WCD*), and statistics of such affiliated Christians are what the churches themselves collect and publish. In all countries, it may be assumed with confidence that the churches know better than the state how many Christians are affiliated to them. This therefore indicates a second measure of the total Christians that is quite

independent of the first (government census figures of professing Christians).

A third definition of membership relates to those who actually practice their religion, i.e. *practicing Christians* who may also be termed active Christians, attending Christians, or committed Christians. Practicing Christians are defined here as those who participate in the ongoing institutional and organized life and pattern of the churches. Using the broadest definition, this covers all affiliated church members who attend church services of public worship a minimum of once a year all who fulfill the minimum annual obligation of their church, which may be reception of communion at Easter and/or on other occasions annually. Using a more rigorous definition, this category can be subdivided into monthly attenders (those who attend church at least once a month) or weekly attenders (those who attend regularly every Sunday). Many churches keep such statistics of practice, and in addition many secular polling organizations provide data on church attendance.

For example, in the Church of Scotland, “active communicants” are defined as persons who communicate (receive communion) at least once a year. In 1939 this was 76.8% of all communicants on the rolls, 56.7% in 1943, 72.0% in 1946, and 71.3% in 1959. In the Coptic Orthodox Church (Egypt), a “practicing Copt” is one who receives communion at least once every 40 days. Sometimes there is a financial connotation as well; some denominations count as practicing adult members only those who contribute each year to local or central church funds. Certain denominations publish detailed definitions: the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States explains, “A ‘participating’ member is one who exercises a continuing interest in one or more of the following ways: attendance, giving, activity, spiritual concern for the fellowship of the congregation regardless of the place of residence.”

Children

All churches would agree that the influence and example of parents are the most powerful of all influences. The family is by far the most important instrumentality through which individuals acquire personal, cultural, and social self-identification. In consequence, children of church members are more likely to remain members than those whose parents are not church members. Children of ardent and practicing Christians usually are, to the extent that their years permit, ardent and practicing Christians. However, many churches do not enumerate children under 15 years. One reason is that it has been widely noted that most conversion crises occur in the 13–20 age group in Christian families or in majority Christian contexts. On this view, therefore, children who have not yet reached 15 cannot reasonably be expected to be practicing and believing Christians. The *World Christian Database* takes the opposite view: children and infants also can properly be called Christians, and can actively and regularly (to the extent of their ability) practice the Christian faith. Consequently, where Christian denominations do not count children in their membership rolls, their membership is reported in our adult category. A total community figure is calculated (in the absence of any additional information from the denomination) by adding in the average number of children reported in United Nations statistics for the given country. Thus, the total community figures are comparable from one denomination to the next whether or not they count children in their membership.

Choice of best data available

Religious demography must attempt to be comprehensive. In certain countries where no hard statistical data or reliable surveys are available, researchers have to rely on the informed estimates of experts in the area and subject. Researchers make no detailed attempt at a critique of each nation's censuses and polls or each church's statistical operations. After examining what is available, researchers then select the best data available until such time as better data come into existence. In addition, there are a number of areas of religious life where it is impossible to obtain accurate statistics, usually because of state opposition to particular tradition(s). Thus it will probably never be possible to get exact numbers of atheists in Indonesia or Baha'i in Iran. Where such information is necessary, reasonable and somewhat conservative estimates are made.

Reconciling discrepancies in survey data

There are post-survey strategies that help general population surveys better reflect the actual composition of a particular country. For instance, if in a survey of 1,000 people, 60% were women and 40% were men, but we know that women and men are each 50% of the country's total population based on a recent census, then each woman's response on the general population survey would be weighted down by a factor of 500/600 and each man's response would be weighted up by a factor of 500/400. Such adjustments are called weighting.

Other adjustments made to general population surveys may require taking into account that are meant to be representative of only adult populations. Therefore their results require adjustments, particularly if some religious groups have more children than others in the same country. This requires either a complete roster of members of each household or some other way to estimate of the number of children living in the household with the adults. When a complete roster is unavailable, most estimates of religious affiliation of children assume that they have the same religion as their one of their parents (usually assumed by demographers to be the religion of the mother). Differences in fertility rates between religious groups are particularly useful in estimating religious differentials among children. This is because demographic projections carry forward children born to women. It may introduce some bias to the degree that the father's religion is more likely to be the religion of the children than the mother.

Example: Coptic Church in Egypt

At times the results from government censuses and information from religious communities can be strikingly different. For example, in Egypt, where the vast majority of the population is Muslim, government censuses taken every 10 years have shown consistently for the past 100 years that a declining share of the population declare themselves as or profess to be Christians. In the most recent census, some 5% identified as Christian. However, church estimates point to a percentage figure three times larger (15%). This discrepancy may be due to overestimates by the churches or attributed, at least in part, to social pressure on some Christians to record themselves as Muslims. Further, according to news reports, some Egyptian Christians have complained that they are listed on official identity cards as Muslims. It also might be that church reports include Egyptian

Christians working as expatriates outside of Egypt, while the census does not, or that the churches simply overestimate their numbers.

Such a lack of clarity is compounded by media reports and even Egyptian government announcements repeatedly claiming that Christians make up 10% or more of the country's approximately 80 million people, despite the fact that the census repeatedly reports only 5%. The highest share of Christians found in an Egyptian census was in 1927 (8.3%). Figures for Egyptian Christians declined in each subsequent census, with Christians making up 5.7% of the Egyptian population in 1996. The report from the most recent census, conducted in 2006, does not, however, provide data on religious affiliation, but a sample of the 2006 census data is available through the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, International (IPUMS). The sample the same Christian share (about 5%) as the latest Egyptian Demographic and Health Survey, with a sample size of 16,527 women ages 15 to 49.

Of course, as noted by Pew Forum demographer Conrad Hackett, "it is possible that Christians in Egypt have been undercounted in censuses and demographic surveys."² According to the Pew Forum's analysis of *Global Restrictions on Religion*,³ Egypt has very high government restrictions on religion as well as high social hostilities involving religion. Hackett goes on to observe that "these factors may lead some Christians, particularly converts from Islam, to be cautious about revealing their identity." Regardless of the actual number, it is very likely that Christians are declining as a proportion of Egypt's population, even if their absolute numbers are not falling. On the one hand, Christian fertility in Egypt has been lower than Muslim fertility. On the other, is possible that Christians have left the country, though a 2012 study by the Pew Forum on the religious affiliation of migrants around the world has not found evidence of an especially large Egyptian Christian diaspora.⁴

Example: Anglican Communion Counting Anglicans

In order to offer a comprehensive assessment of the global Anglican population, it is necessary to situate Anglicans within a global taxonomy of religion, which includes at least three major considerations: (1) Anglicans in the context of other Anglicans; (2) Anglicans in the context of other Christians; and (3) Anglicans in the context of other religionists. Creating a global taxonomy of Anglican membership must address consistency of data between the groups in order to provide a more accurate and comprehensive picture.

First, any data collected need to be comparable between different Anglican communities, particularly from one country to the next. Even at this foundational level, counting Anglicans presents several challenges. Individual churches report membership figures to

² Pew Research Center, "Ask the Expert," May 11, 2011, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1770/ask-the-expert-pew-research-center#christians-egypt>.

³ Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life Project, *Global Restrictions on Religion*, December 17, 2009, <http://www.pewforum.org/Government/Global-Restrictions-on-Religion.aspx>.

⁴ See Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life Project, "Faith on the Move: The Religious Affiliation of International Migrants," March 8, 2012, <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/03/08/religious-migration-exec/>.

national headquarters, but this reporting can be uneven from congregation to congregation. Some represent very detailed membership lists kept by church secretaries, while others are rough enumerations. Also, some congregations have strict requirements as to who can be considered a member, while others have much looser definitions of what constitutes membership. Rules for inclusion as a member can differ based on a range of issues, including baptism, confirmation, and active membership.⁵ Thus, all sources need to be analyzed for comparability. A national census, for example, asks for self-identification whereas a church membership roll could be based on baptisms and therefore might not match exactly. For instance, in Grenada in 1990–91, the census reported that 13.9% of the population identified as Anglican. That same year the Anglican Church reported 14,600 members (or 16.0% of the population). Several reasons for the difference are possible: (1) baptized Anglicans considered themselves something else; (2) the census did not properly identify children of Anglicans as Anglican; (3) people who refused to answer, or checked “don’t know” or “none”, were actually baptized Anglicans. Regardless, comparing with earlier census and church statistics, either of the figures reflects a steep decline in Anglicanism in Grenada (from 35% in 1900 to 11% in 2015).⁶

Second, who is counted as an Anglican needs to be consistent with how other Christian traditions are counted. That is, the data collected need to be counting the same population—for example, including both men and women and children and adults. One of the fundamental areas of comparison relates to the counting of children. Groups that practice infant baptism, like Anglicans, tend to count all children as church members, while those who practice adult (“believer’s”) baptism do not. Most membership figures from Anglican churches do include children, though surveys and polls normally include only adults. If adults only are included then special formulas based on a demographic profile of the community (or, lacking that, of the general population) are needed to add children to the adult figures.⁷

Finally, the method of counting Anglicans should be consistent with those used for other religions. It should make sense when someone reports figures for, say, Muslims and Anglicans in the same country. Both should include children and comprise individuals who self-identify with that tradition. One way in which this does not happen is when counting Anglicans relates to practice, such as church attendance, while counting Muslims is based on self-identification (instead of comparable mosque attendance). For example, while it is interesting that 1 million Anglicans are in church every Sunday in England, this figure cannot be compared with the 2.7 million self-identified Muslims in England.⁸ A more accurate comparison would be how many self-identified Anglicans vs. self-identified

⁵ Ward, *Global Anglicanism*, 1.

⁶ See “Grenada,” in David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 2nd edition, 321–323 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁷ See “Enumerating Global Christianity,” in Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross, eds., *Atlas of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 343.

⁸ A more nuanced piece comparing Christian practice with Muslim practice by Damian Thompson, editor of *Telegraph* blogs, can be found at <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/damianthompson/100073809/practising-muslims-will-very-soon-overtake-weekly-churchgoers-in-britain/>.

Muslims live in a country, or how many church-attending Anglicans and mosque-attending Muslims there are.

It is a surprisingly complex task to determine the number of people affiliated with the Church of England. This question appears to have at least three answers. Using church attendance as a guide, approximately 1 million people participate in a Church of England service each week.⁹ Using surveys as a guide, 8.5 million identify with the Church of England.¹⁰ Finally, using the church's figures of baptized members gives a figure of approximately 25 million in the Church of England.¹¹ If comparability with the demographics of other Anglicans, Christians, and religious adherents is indeed important, then it is highly plausible that the larger number represents the wider reality of the Church of England (baptism and self-identification). Note that the figure of 25 million is also used by the Anglican Communion to arrive at their global total of 85 million.¹² At the same time, stricter measures of participation and involvement are useful in examining the health and vitality of the tradition.

Totals and rounding

All columns of absolute numbers in tables always add up exactly to the totals and subtotals shown. However, as with all large statistical tables, a column of percentages may not always add up to exactly the total or subtotal indicated, due to rounding. Although in most cases throughout this survey component percentages in fact add up exactly to their respective totals, in a small number of cases this is not so because of the rounding feature. As an example, a total may be: $0.13\%+0.13\%+0.13\%=0.39\%$; when each is rounded to only one place of decimals, the figures become $0.1\%+0.1\%+0.1\%=0.4\%$, which introduces a small discrepancy.

Dates of statistics

It is important, in changing situations, to know the exact date (year, perhaps also month and sometimes day) to which particular statistics apply. This methodology compares government statistics of religion with statistics from religious communities themselves; but in doing so, it must be remembered that a government census (or a public-opinion poll) is almost always taken on a single, known day; whereas, by contrast, religious statistics are compiled over a lengthy period that may amount to 3, 4, 5, 6 or even 7 years from the local grass-roots counting of heads to final compilation of totals by a large denomination or church. Denominational totals published in 2010 therefore probably refer to the situation in 2002, 2001 or even 2000.

Dynamics of change in religious populations

The question of how and why the number of religious adherents changes over time is critical to the study of international religious demography. It is more complex than

⁹ Mark Chapman, *Anglicanism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 9.

¹⁰ NatCen's British Social Attitudes survey, May 2015, <http://www.natcen.ac.uk>. See also, RT News, May 31, 2015, <https://www.rt.com/uk/263693-anglican-church-decrease-believers/>.

¹¹ This is the figure the Church of England reports to the World Council of Churches. See <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/church-of-england>.

¹² See "What is the Anglican Communion?" at <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/identity/about.aspx>.

simply “counting heads” via births and deaths—a well-established area in quantitative sociological studies—but in addition involves the multifaceted areas of religious conversion and migration. The migration of religious people is only in the past few years become a more researched area of demographic study, and issues surrounding religious conversion continue to be under-represented in the field. Data on religion from a wide range of sources—including from the religious communities themselves, as well as governments and scholars—must be employed to understand the total scope of religious affiliation. Given data on a particular religion from two separate points in time, the question can be raised, “What are the dynamics by which the number of adherents changes over time?” The dynamics of change in religious affiliation can be reduced to three sets of empirical population data that together enable enumeration of the increase or decrease in adherents over time. To measure overall change, these three sets can be defined as follows: (1) births minus deaths; (2) converts to minus converts from; and (3) immigrants minus emigrants.¹³ The first variable in each of these three sets (births, converts to, immigrants) measures increase, whereas the second (deaths, converts from, emigrants) measures decrease. All future (and current) projections of religious affiliation, within any subset of the global population (normally a country or region), will account for these dynamics, and the changes themselves are dependent on these dynamics.

Births

The primary mechanism of global religious demographic change is (live) births. Children are almost always counted as having the religion of their parents (as is the law in Norway, for example). In simple terms, if populations that are predominantly Muslim, for example, have more children on average than those that are predominantly Christian or Hindu, then over time (all other things being equal) Muslims will become an increasingly larger percentage of that population. This means that the relative size of a religious population has a close statistical relationship to birthrates.

Deaths

Even as births increase their memberships, religious communities experience constant loss through the deaths of members. Though this often includes tragic, unanticipated deaths of younger members, it most frequently affects the elderly members. Thus, changes in health care and technology can positively impact religious communities if members live longer.

Births minus deaths/total fertility rate

The change over time in any given population is most simply expressed as the number of births into the community minus the number of deaths out of it. Many religious communities around the world experience little else in the dynamics of their growth or decline. Detailed projections rely on a number of estimated measures, including life expectancy, population age structures, and the total fertility rate. This means that any attempt to understand the dynamics of religious affiliation must be based firmly on demographic projections of births and deaths.

¹³ On a global scale, immigrants and emigrants are the same; that is, when one immigrates *to* a host country, he is also emigrating *from* a home country. In essence, the difference here is zero.

Converts to

It is a common observation that individuals (or even whole villages or communities) change allegiance from one religion to another (or to no religion at all). Unfortunately, one of the problems in studying conversion is the paucity of information on it. Reliable data on conversions are hard to obtain for a number of reasons. Although some national censuses ask people about their religion, they do not directly ask whether people have converted to their present faith. A few cross-national surveys do contain questions about religious switching, but even in those surveys it is difficult to assess whether more people leave a religion than enter it. In some countries, legal and social consequences make conversion difficult, and survey respondents might be reluctant to speak honestly about the topic. In particular, Hinduism is for many Hindus (as is Islam for many Muslims) not just a religion but also an ethnic or cultural identity that does not depend on whether a person actively practices the faith. Thus even non-practicing or secular Hindus may still consider themselves, and be viewed by their neighbors, as Hindus.

Converts from

Conversion to a new religion, as mentioned above, also involves conversion from a previous one. Thus, a convert to Islam is, at the same time, a convert from another religion. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the most converts from Christianity were and continue to be found largely among those in the Western world who have decided to be agnostics or atheists.

Converts to minus converts from

The net conversion rate in a population is calculated by subtracting the number of converts from the number of converts to. Conversion to and conversion from will likely continue to play a role in changing religious demographics in the future.

Immigrants

Equally important at the international level is how the movement of people across national borders impacts religious affiliation. Once religious communities are established through immigration they often grow vigorously (for a time) via high birth rates.

Emigrants

In a reversal of nineteenth-century European colonization of Africa, Asia, and parts of the Americas, the late twentieth century witnessed waves of emigration of people from these regions to the Western world. The impact on religious affiliation is significant.

Immigrants minus emigrants

In the twenty-first century, international migration continues to have a significant impact on the religious composition of individual countries. One can try to anticipate the way in which expected immigration and emigration trends will affect a country's population over time. One profound change to be expected is the increase of religious pluralism in most every country of the world. Increasing religious pluralism is not always welcomed and can be seen as a political, cultural, national, or religious threat.

The six dynamics discussed above determine changes in religious demographics. Gains are the result of three positive dynamics: births, conversions to, and immigration. Losses are the result of three negative dynamics: deaths, conversions from, and emigration. The net change in religious demographics is the result of gains minus losses. The balance of dynamics can be reflected in any proportions (for example, mainly births for gains, mainly conversions from for losses) but can also be represented by pairing the gains and losses by type: births vs. deaths, converts to vs. converts from, and immigrants vs. emigrants. In each case, the net change (either positive or negative) will be the difference between the two. This means that any attempt to understand religious affiliation in the past, present, or future must be firmly based on demographic dynamics. A proper awareness of these dynamics and their significance is thus vital both for undertaking and for interpreting studies of the future of religion.

Measuring growth rates

The rates of growth, increase, decrease or decline of membership in many congregations can readily be measured from their annually reported statistics. This has been done by obtaining the statistics for 2 different years, where possible 5 years apart (to minimize the effects of roll-cleaning and other annual irregularities), usually 2000–2005 and 2005–2010, and working out the average annual growth rate as a percentage. Great care must be taken in such computations to ensure that the statistics used are measuring exactly the same entity (especially geographically) for each of the 2 years concerned. Growth, as percent increase or decrease per year, must be measured by dividing any annual increase by the identical category of total. Thus a church, for example, in a particular country with 500,000 total adherents (including children) in 2005 which grows to 600,000 total adherents (including children) in 2010 shows an increase of 600,000 minus 500,000 = 100,000, which divided by 5 = 20,000 a year, which divided by the mean membership of 550,000 gives an increase rate of 3.64% per year. In practice, the methodology follows a more accurate method by using the 1970 and 1995 figures for each denomination to arrive at exponential annual rates.

There are several different ways of measuring the growth of a religious body. Firstly, one can measure either adults only, or total community including children. Secondly, the growth rate of a church or religious grouping can be measured over a single day, or a month, a year, a decade, or 50 years—and all will yield differing results. This survey is concerned primarily to measure long-term rates. A growth rate measured for a specific religious body over a 2- or 3-year period may not be sustained throughout the decade, which explains differences in rates for the same church obtained at different times.

Projecting religious populations

The starting point of future studies is natural growth of the total population of the country or region of interest, utilizing demographic projections as a baseline. Three major areas beyond natural growth were then utilized to improve the projections. First, birth and death rates vary among religious communities within a particular country. Second, increasing numbers of people are likely to change their religious affiliations in the future. Third, immigration and emigration trends will impact a country's population over time. The highest quality projections for religious communities are built on cohort-component

projections—ones that use differential rates for each religion: age-specific fertility rates by religion, age structure in 5-year age-and-sex cohorts by religion, migration rates by religion, and mortality by religion.

Unfortunately, this kind of detail is not yet available for many countries (half of censuses do not ask a question about religion). Fortunately, the process of filling in missing data using demographic and smaller scale general population surveys is underway, and as these data become available through the Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project, researchers will have access to these data through the *World Religion Database*, where they will be archived in full, with summary results available at the Pew Forum's website. In the meantime, projections cannot solely rely on the cohort-component method. Instead, they use a hybrid projection method. First, the 2015 religious composition of each country is established as the baseline. Then, utilizing the United Nations medium variant cohort-component projections of populations for five-year periods up to 2050,¹⁴ future religious shares are modestly adjusted from the 2015 baseline. Adjustments are based on analysis of past differential growth rates of religious groups, factoring in historical patterns of religious switching and possible future attenuation of past trends. Finally, these projections take into account how immigrants might alter the future religious composition of country populations.

Example of differences in methodology impacting future projections

The Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project released a report on April 2, 2015, on the future of world religions (<http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/>), consisting of population projections between 2010 and 2050. A major finding of the report is that by 2050, Christian and Muslim populations will be nearly the same size, 2.9 billion and 2.7 billion, respectively, with no change in the percentage of the world that is Christian (31.4%). In January 2015, the Center for the Study of Global Christianity (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, MA, USA) released a statistical table (<http://www.gordonconwell.edu/resources/documents/2IBMR2015.pdf>) on the status of global Christianity from 1900–2050.¹⁵ While our analysis is similar to Pew's in many ways, there are some important differences. We anticipate a much wider divergence between the Christian and Muslim populations in 2050: 3.4 billion Christians (compared to Pew's 2.9 billion) and 2.7 billion Muslims (similar to Pew).

Pew and the Center use similar methods to track religious adherence worldwide (tracking births, deaths, conversions to religions, conversions from religions, emigration, immigration). Pew does utilize more detailed age/set data by religion where it is available from censuses and surveys. Both reports use census and survey data to arrive at best

¹⁴ Data are from United Nations, *World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision* (Blue Ridge Summit, PA: United Nations Publications, 2013). Note that if a religious population is near 100% of a country's population, then the United Nations cohort data is applicable to the whole religious population. The challenge is estimating any variation from this in minority populations. If birth or death rates vary dramatically from the majority religious community, then the future share of that minority population can be very different from its present share.

¹⁵ The Center has been publishing 2050 projections for all religions since 1990, updating them every 2 years according to the latest UN Population Projections reports.

estimates, but the Center also considers data from religious communities themselves, such as denominational statistics.

There are several reasons for the discrepancy between Pew's and the Center's numbers of Christians in 2050 (2.9 billion vs. 3.4 billion). The Center taps into knowledge from contacts in every country of the world who inform us on what is happening in non-traditional forms of Christianity, such as house churches and insider movements (where individuals convert to Christianity in secret and/or remain identified with their past religion). Some of the most significant growth of Christianity in the world today, and into the future, is indeed non-traditional and does not easily get picked up in traditional demographic measures such as censuses, surveys, and polls. This is particularly the case in China and India. Pew does not model religious switching in either China (p.20) or India (p.100), citing a lack of reliable data. It is true that official censuses in many countries measure current religion but do not ask about childhood religion and that it is not possible to measure the switching patterns of individuals using census data (p.41). However, in the absence of "official" sources, the Center employs "non-official" sources. On-the-ground contacts in China and India consistently report that Christianity is growing due to conversions, and many of these Christians are organized in "underground" or secret communities.

In addition, respondents to census-takers or other officials in countries with high governmental and/or social restrictions on religion (such as China and India) often do not report their true religious affiliation in order to avoid persecution. As a result, the Center's percentages of Christians in China and India in 2050 (15.8% and 6.9%, respectively) are higher than those of Pew (5.4% and 2.2%). The Center projects Christians in China and India to number a combined 330 million in 2050, compared to Pew's figure of 108 million.

Pew and the Center use different base population figures (the 2010 and 2012 revisions, respectively, of the United Nations World Population Prospects). Using the 2012 figures rather than those for 2010 adds almost 81 million Christians to Pew's global total. In addition, the Center consistently finds more switching to Christianity in many African and Asian countries, also accounting for the overall difference in estimates for Christians in 2050.

Ethno-linguistic people groups

A problem for social science research is the lack of available survey and polling data in non-Western countries. While the United States and many European countries have a long history of engaging in this kind of research, many—often more underdeveloped—countries can be difficult to access and/or speak languages difficult for Western researchers. The *WCD's* method directly addresses this methodological challenge through its additional taxonomy of the world's ethnic groups, which are paired with religious statistics.

A "peoples" taxonomy must take into account both ethnicity and language. The approach taken in "Ethnosphere" in Part 8 of the *World Christian Encyclopedia* was to match ethnic codes with language codes, which produced over 13,700 distinct

ethnolinguistic peoples.¹⁶ Not all combinations of ethnicity and language are possible, but nevertheless every person in the world can be categorized as belonging to an (mutually exclusive) ethnolinguistic people. For example, there are ethnic Kazaks who speak Kazak as their mother tongue and ethnic Kazaks who speak Russian as their mother tongue. These are two separate ethnolinguistic peoples.

The work of determining the religious break of ethnolinguistic peoples was begun in the 1970s in Africa, where many Christian churches reported the ethnic breakdown of their congregations. Utilizing data gathered by religions and in government censuses, estimates of religious affiliation for all peoples was completed in the mid-1990s and published in *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 2nd edition. These data continue to be updated and published in the *World Christian Database* and *World Religion Database*.

Each distinct ethno-linguistic group in a country is assigned varying shares of the 18 categories of religion. For example, the Japanese in Japan are reported as 56% Mahayana Buddhist, 23% various New religionist, 10% agnostic, 3% atheist, 2% Shinto, and 1% Christian. Each group is traced throughout the world with the assumption that whatever their religious breakdown is in their home country will be the same abroad.¹⁷ This allows researchers to locate Christian people in predominantly non-Christian countries. For example, the *WCD* reports that Pakistan—a majority-Muslim country—is also home to over 2 million Christians. While Christians are found among Muslim-majority people groups (for example, Punjabi at 4% Christian), they are also present in the country as ex-pats, such as French (76% Christian) and British (84% Christian).

Counting Pentecostals

Three types of Pentecostals

For the purpose of understanding the diverse global phenomenon of Pentecostalism, it is still useful to divide the movement into three kinds or types. First are denominational Pentecostals, organized into denominations in the early part of the twentieth century. Second are Charismatics, individuals in the mainline denominations (primarily after the mid-twentieth century). Third are Independent Charismatics, those who broke free of denominational Pentecostalism or mainline denominations to form their own networks.

¹⁶ The construction of the taxonomy is explained in more detail in David B. Barrett, Todd M. Johnson, Christopher Guidry, and Peter Crossing, *World Christian Trends, AD 30–AD 2200: Interpreting the Annual Christian Megacensus* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library Publication, 2003), part 18, “Ethnolinguistics.” The ethnic or culture codes are outlined in David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson, eds., *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*, vol 2: *Religions, Peoples, Languages, Cities, Topics*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), table 8-1. The languages are listed in *WCE*, Part 9 “Linguametrics” and are derived from David Dalby, David Barrett, and Michael Mann, *The Linguasphere Register of the World’s Languages and Speech Communities*, 2 vols (Carmarthenshire, Wales: Linguasphere Press, 1999). All are available online at www.worldchristiandatabase.org.

¹⁷ There is a limitation with this initial assumption (unless otherwise determined), especially in terms of religiously persecuted people. For example, many of the people groups who have left the Middle East (majority-Muslim countries) are more Christian. For example, Iraqis in Iraq are 98% Muslim (essentially 0% Christian), whereas in the United States, where many refugees have fled to, Iraqis are 82% Muslim (and 16% Christian).

Pentecostals (Type 1)

Pentecostals are defined as Christians who are members of the explicitly Pentecostal denominations whose major characteristic is a new experience of the energizing ministry of the Holy Spirit that most other Christians have considered to be highly unusual. This is interpreted as a rediscovery of the spiritual gifts of New Testament times and their restoration to ordinary Christian life and ministry. Classical Pentecostalism usually is held to have begun in the United States in 1901 though Most scholars have moved to a “multiple origins” theory of the birth of modern Pentecostalism, emphasizing early activity outside of the Western World. For a brief period Pentecostalism expected to remain an interdenominational movement within the existing churches, but from 1909 onward its members increasingly were ejected from mainline bodies and so forced to begin new organized denominations.

Pentecostal denominations hold the distinctive teachings that all Christians should seek a post-conversion religious experience called baptism in the Holy Spirit and that a Spirit-baptized believer may receive one or more of the supernatural gifts known in the Early Church: the ability to prophesy; to practice divine healing through prayer; to speak (*glossolalia*), interpret, or sing in tongues; to sing in the Spirit, dance in the Spirit, pray with upraised hands; to receive dreams, visions, words of wisdom, words of knowledge; to discern spirits; to perform miracles, power encounters, exorcisms (casting out demons), resuscitations, deliverances, or other signs and wonders.

From 1906 onward, the hallmark of explicitly Pentecostal denominations, by comparison with Holiness/Perfectionist denominations, has been the single addition of speaking with other tongues as the “initial evidence” of one’s having received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, whether or not one subsequently experiences regularly the gift of tongues. Most Pentecostal denominations teach that tongues-speaking is mandatory for all members, but in reality today not all members have practiced this gift, either initially or as an ongoing experience. Pentecostals are defined here as all associated with explicitly Pentecostal denominations that identify themselves in explicitly Pentecostal terms, or with other denominations that as a whole are phenomenologically Pentecostal in teaching and practice.

Among Protestants (coded as “P-”) are Pentecostal denominations such as the Assemblies of God. Sub-categories of Oneness (Pe1), Baptist (Pe2), Holiness (Pe3), Perfectionist (Pe4), and Apostolic (PeA) were retained from earlier research. Each minor tradition within Pentecostalism (currently limited to codes beginning with P-Pe) is considered to be 100% Pentecostal (all members of Pentecostal denominations are counted as Pentecostals).

Charismatics (Type 2)

Charismatics are defined as Christians affiliated to non-Pentecostal denominations (Anglican, Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox) who receive the experiences above in what has been termed the Charismatic Movement. The Charismatic Movement’s roots go back to early Pentecostalism, but its rapid expansion has been

mainly since 1960 (later called the Charismatic renewal). Charismatics usually describe themselves as having been “renewed in the Spirit” and as experiencing the Spirit’s supernatural and miraculous and energizing power. They remain within, and form organized renewal groups within, their older mainline non-Pentecostal denominations (instead of leaving to join Pentecostal denominations). They demonstrate any or all of the *charismata pneumatika* (gifts of the Spirit) including signs and wonders (but with *glossolalia* regarded as optional). Concerning the key word, note that “In the technical Pauline sense charismata (AV, gifts) denote extraordinary powers, distinguishing certain Christians and enabling them to serve the church of Christ, the reception of which is due to the power of divine grace operating in their souls by the Holy Spirit.”

Type 2 recognizes the existence of Pentecostal individuals within the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant traditions. These are designated “Charismatic” and evaluated by country as Catholic Charismatics, Anglican Charismatics, and so on, designating renewal within an existing tradition. For example, the beginning of the Charismatic movement in Anglican churches is described by Episcopal priest Dennis Bennett in *Nine O’clock in the Morning* (Alachua, FL: Bridge-Logos, 1970). Traditions are assessed to determine what percentage of adherents identifies themselves as Charismatics, ranging from 0–99%. Self-identification percentages for Charismatics were calculated by contacting renewal agencies working within denominations.

Independent Charismatics (Type 3)

While the classification and chronology of the first two types is straightforward, there are thousands of churches and movements that ‘resemble’ the first two types but do not fit their definitions. These constitute a third type and often pre-date the first two types. For lack of a better term, these are called “Independent Charismatics.” Part of the rationale for this term is the fact that they are largely found in the Independent category of the overall taxonomy of Christians. Thus, Type 3 includes Pentecostal or semi-Pentecostal members of the 250-year-old Independent movement of Christians, primarily in the Global South, of churches begun without reference to Western Christianity. These indigenous movements, though not all explicitly Pentecostal, nevertheless have the main features of Pentecostalism. In addition, since Azusa Street, thousands of schismatic or other independent Charismatic churches have come out of Type 1 Pentecostals and Type 2 Charismatic movements. They consist of Christians who, unrelated to or no longer related to the Pentecostal or Charismatic denominations, have become filled with the Spirit, or empowered by the Spirit, and have experienced the Spirit’s ministry (though usually without recognizing a baptism in the Spirit separate from conversion); who exercise gifts of the Spirit (with much less emphasis on tongues, as optional or even absent or unnecessary) and emphasize signs and wonders, supernatural miracles and power encounters; but also do not identify themselves as either Pentecostals (Type 1) or Charismatics (Type 2). In a number of countries they exhibit Pentecostal and Charismatic phenomena but combine this with rejection of Pentecostal terminology.

These believers frequently are identified by their leadership as Independent, Postdenominationalist, Restorationist, Radical, Neo-Apostolic, or “Third Wave.”

Thus, the third type is Independent Charismatics (also known in the literature as neocharismatics or neopentecostals) who are not in Protestant Pentecostal denominations (Type 1) nor are they individual Charismatics in the traditional churches (Type 2). Type 3 is the most diverse of the three types and ranges from house churches in China to African Initiated Churches to white-led Charismatic networks in the Western world. It includes Pentecostals who had split off from established Protestant denominations (Type 1) and who were then labeled as Independent (I-), with sub-category codes similar to those used for Protestant Pentecostals (pen, pe1, pe2, and so on). Independent churches formed by Charismatic leaders (Type 2) who founded new congregations and networks are also included. Some Independent Charismatics speak in tongues, but healing and power evangelism are more prominent in this type than in the other two.

Three types together

One difficulty that has plagued all researchers and historians of Pentecostalism is what to call the overarching movement. Some have used “Pentecostalism” or “Global Pentecostalism,” while others have used “Charismatic.” Still others have used “Pentecostal and Charismatic.” David Barrett originally used the lengthy phrase “the Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal of the Holy Spirit,” which he later shortened to “Renewal.” He then coined the term “Renewalist” to refer to all three waves or types. While not an ideal term, it is still preferable because it is different from the other three descriptors and cannot be confused with them.

A demographic overview of Renewalists (all types) illustrates the complexities of both the spread of the movement across the countries of the world and the striking diversity of the churches themselves. While current ways of understanding Pentecostals, Charismatics, and Independent Charismatics reveal a global movement of immense proportions, perspectives on classification, counting, and assessment of the movement are likely to continue to evolve in the future. In the meantime, hundreds of millions of Christians across all traditions will continue to participate in the movement—bringing vitality in some denominations and schism in others. They will also promote social transformation in some communities and show little participation in others. What is certain is that, for the foreseeable future, Christianity as a whole will continue to experience the growth pains of this global phenomenon.

Counting Evangelicals

Any effective and comprehensive method for counting Evangelicals must take into consideration denominational affiliation, self-identification, and theology. The results of counting Evangelicals are directly related to denominational membership figures. Strictly speaking, denominational affiliation means official membership on a church roll.

Method 1: Individuals in Denominations That Are 100% Evangelical

According to the CSGC, the first category of Evangelicals includes individuals who are found in denominations that are coded 100% Evangelical. That is, membership in an Evangelical council (either national, regional, or global) is assessed for every denomination, and those denominations that have Evangelical affiliations are classed as 100% Evangelical. Consequently, 100 percent of the members of these denominations are considered Evangelicals. Utilizing this method alone, the *World Christian Database* estimates there are 150 million Evangelicals in the world. As of 2010, the nine largest 100% Evangelical denominations in the world are all Protestant, and the five largest 100% Evangelical denominations are found in Brazil, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Indonesia, reflecting the global scope of the movement.

Method 2: Individuals Who Self-Identify as Evangelical in Non-100% Evangelical Denominations

For those denominations not identified as 100% Evangelical, an estimate is made of the percentage (0–99 percent) of members who self-identify as Evangelical. Self-identification percentages for Evangelicals in non-100% Evangelical denominations are verified by contacting key figures within each denomination, and each estimate is sourced in documentation housed at the CSGC. Adding together figures from both 100% and partially Evangelical denominations gives a total of two hundred eighty-five million Evangelicals worldwide. Looking at both 100% and non-100% Evangelical denominations reveals that the movement has a significant presence beyond Western Protestantism. Some of the denominations with the most Evangelicals are within Anglicanism in the global South, such as the Anglican Church of Nigeria and the Church of Uganda. Chinese house churches (classified as Independents) taken together constitute the denomination with the third most Evangelicals globally. The United Kingdom (the Church of England) and the United States (the Southern Baptist Convention), however, are still important locations of the movement.

Method 3: Evangelicals Not Affiliated with Any Denomination (Unaffiliated Evangelicals)

To date, no studies have addressed directly how many Evangelicals are denominationally unaffiliated. However, two well-known realities (in Western Christianity, in particular) appear to provide indirect evidence for this undocumented trend. The first is reflected in recent research indicating the unaffiliated are not uniformly nonreligious.¹⁸ The Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project reported that 68 percent of America's unaffiliated believe in God.¹⁹ It is reasonable to assume that a notable proportion of

¹⁸ Pew Research Center, "Global Religious Landscape," *Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project*, December 18, 2012, <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/>. This report states that of the world's 1.1 billion unaffiliated, a significant portion maintains some kind of religious belief: "Various surveys have found that belief in God or a higher power is shared by 7% of unaffiliated Chinese adults, 30% of unaffiliated French adults and 68% of unaffiliated U.S. adults" (1). Many also participate in a variety of religious practices, such as prayer and attendance at religious services.

¹⁹ Pew Research Center, "'Nones' on the Rise," *Pew Research Religion and Public Life Report*, October 9, 2012, <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/>.

Christians is among the ranks of the unaffiliated by virtue of Christianity being the largest religion in many of the countries studied. The second reality is the acknowledged fact that unaffiliated Christians often attend and are active in churches, including Evangelical churches, without becoming official members. These unaffiliated Christians profess allegiance and commitment to Christ but do not maintain church affiliation.

Without specific survey or polling data on the activities or beliefs of unaffiliated Evangelicals, calculating their number worldwide requires a broad estimate.²⁰ One starting point is to consider the percentage of unaffiliated Christians in a particular country and evaluate it in light of the country's Evangelical presence. For example, South Africa was home to 35.8 million affiliated Christians in 2010 (71.4 percent of the country's population). Of these, 4.7 million were Evangelicals, found in both 100% Evangelical denominations and in non-100% Evangelical denominations (methods 1 + 2). The population also included 5.3 million unaffiliated Christians (10.6 percent of the population), for a total of 41.1 million Christians (82.0 percent of the country's population). Assuming that the same proportion of unaffiliated Christians as affiliated Christians are Evangelicals yields an additional 695,000 Evangelicals, raising the number of Evangelicals in South Africa to a total of 5.4 million (both affiliated and unaffiliated; methods 1 + 2 + 3).²¹ Applying the calculation to the world's Christian population, country by country, results in an additional 14.3 million unaffiliated Evangelicals globally. (Over 70 percent of the world's unaffiliated Evangelicals live in the United States.) Adding together the results for unaffiliated and affiliated Evangelicals gives a total of 299.8 million Evangelicals worldwide (13 percent of the global population). This compares to 285.5 million affiliated Evangelicals, according to the structural definition of the *World Christian Database*.²¹

Method 4: Individuals Who Align with a Specific Set of Theological Descriptors

In demographic analysis, one primary supporter of a theological definition of *Evangelicalism* is *Operation World*. Begun by Patrick Johnstone and continued first by Jason Mandryk and currently by Molly Wall, *Operation World* has appeared in seven editions since 1964, with the most recent edition released in 2010.²² It is an easy-to-read, accessible resource intended primarily for equipping missionaries and mission-minded laypeople to pray for the nations and the church around the world. The 2010 edition defined Evangelicals as all those who adhere to all four theological articles that paint a picture very close to the Bebbington Quadrilateral.²³

²⁰ The ratio of unaffiliated Evangelicals to affiliated Evangelicals in any particular country is assumed to be the same as the ratio of unaffiliated Christians to affiliated Christians. This yields a simplified formula of unaffiliated Evangelicals = (unaffiliated Christians) × (affiliated Evangelicals) ÷ (affiliated Christians).

²¹ There are, of course, limitations to using such a blunt tool for measuring unaffiliated Evangelicals. The assumption that Evangelical and non-Evangelical Christians are equally likely to be unaffiliated might result in an inflation of the actual number of Evangelicals in a particular country. Little data are available on the probability that someone who self-identifies only as "Christian," with no church affiliation or other descriptor specified, is an Evangelical. This is even more true for the "totally unaffiliated," those who self-identify as "nothing in particular." While some might consider the likelihood that either type of individual is Evangelical to be slim, however, it is not impossible, given the individualistic tendencies of the movement.

²² Jason Mandryk, *Operation World* (Colorado Springs: Biblica, 2010).

²³ *Ibid.*, 958–59. The definition of evangelical is as follows: "All who emphasize and adhere to all four of the following: The Lord Jesus Christ as the sole source of salvation through faith in Him, as validated by His

Although both *Operation World* and the *World Christian Database* are based on denominational data, *Operation World's* theological definition of *Evangelicals* differs from the *World Christian Database's* strictly structural approach. The *Operation World* team consists of individuals, who themselves adhere to the previously mentioned theological descriptors, trying to identify other people around the world who also hold those characteristics. The team's methodology does not rely on self-identification as Evangelical but rather on assessment and educated estimates. Theological criteria such as these tend to produce much larger Evangelical figures. Globally, *Operation World* reported 545.9 million Evangelicals in 2010, while the *World Christian Database* reported 299.2 million, nearly half as many.²⁴

The larger *Operation World* figure includes people who do not self-identify as Evangelical with respect to their denomination but who match a set of theological descriptors. It is telling that some of the largest discrepancies occur in countries in the global South (except for the United States, explained in the next paragraph), where Evangelicalism is relatively young and where denominational affiliation, of either the individual with a denomination or the denomination with regional Evangelical bodies, might not be as strong or apparent (i.e., where structural Evangelicalism is more difficult to enumerate).

One example of significant denominational discrepancy is the African American population in the United States. African Americans are often excluded from sociological and political discussions of Evangelicalism because of the perception that Evangelicalism is a white phenomenon. In reality, many African American Christians generally adhere to the theological characteristics of historical Evangelicalism, which is why *Operation World* includes them in its figures for Evangelicals in the United States. Of the eight largest denominational discrepancies between *Operation World* and *World Christian Database*, six are within predominantly African American traditions. Together, these six denominations add another 18.7 million individuals in the United States that *Operation World* considers Evangelical but the *World Christian Database* does not.

China is the most challenging country in terms of counting Evangelicals. *Operation World* reported 76.0 million Evangelicals in China as of 2010, while the *World Christian Database* reported only 15.2 million (a difference of 60.8 million). Despite the significant growth of the house church movement in China, no overtly Evangelical organization can be easily identified and tracked there. On the other hand, if all of the house churches in China suddenly joined the World Evangelical Alliance, a global Evangelical communion, then the *World Christian Database* would automatically consider all house church members Evangelical. *Operation World*, however, already considers most members of Chinese house churches Evangelical, based on *Operation World's* assessment of their theological leanings. In many other churches in the global South it is difficult to apply the label *Evangelical* because of the historical and cultural context in which the movement was born.

crucifixion and resurrection. Personal faith and conversion with regeneration by the Holy Spirit. Recognition of the inspired Word of God as the ultimate basis and authority for faith and Christian living. Commitment to biblical witness, evangelism and mission that brings others to faith in Christ.”

²⁴ With the addition of the unaffiliated Evangelicals (methods 1 + 2 + 3).