
Christianity 2010: A View from the *New Atlas of Global Christianity*

This eight-page report is the twenty-sixth in an annual series in the *IBMR*. The series began in 1985, shortly after the publication of the first edition of the *World Christian Encyclopedia* (*WCE*; Oxford Univ. Press, 1982). Its purpose was to present, in summary form on a single page, an annual update of the most significant global and regional statistics presented in the *WCE*. The *WCE* itself was expanded into a second edition in 2001 and was accompanied by an analytic volume, *World Christian Trends* (*WCT*; William Carey Library, 2001). In 2003 an online database, the *World Christian Database* (later published by Brill), was launched, updating most of the statistics in the *WCE* and *WCT*.

In 2009 the team behind these earlier books published the *Atlas of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2009), a visual quick-reference of the changing status of global Christianity over the 100 years since the epoch-making World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh, Scotland, in June 1910. It is the first scholarly atlas to depict the twentieth-century shift of Christianity to the Global South. It is also the first to map Christian affiliation at the provincial level. The atlas is divided into five major parts.

Part 1 covers the world with maps on world issues and world religions, comparing the global context of 1910 and 2010.

Part 2 focuses on the Christian context, with thematic maps on major Christian traditions, including Anglicans, Independents, Marginals, Orthodox, Protestants, and Roman Catholics, as well as Evangelicals and Pentecostals.

Part 3 depicts Christianity by the United Nations regions (Eastern Africa, Middle Africa, Northern Africa, etc.). Each region (and continent) is described in four pages, including a historical essay, maps, graphs, tables, and charts.

Part 4 views the world by languages, peoples, and cities.

Part 5 focuses on Christian mission by analyzing data on missionaries, finance, Bible translation, media broadcasting, and other forms of evangelization.

A CD with an interactive electronic product is included in the back sleeve. It contains presentation-ready files of all maps, charts, graphs, and tables for classroom use. We present here three two-page spreads adapted from oversize (10 × 14 inches) *Atlas of Global Christianity* pages.

Missionaries Worldwide, 1910–2010

The first two pages offer an overview of the statistics of national workers and foreign missionaries around the world in 2010. For quick comparisons, estimates are made of the numbers of foreign missionaries in 1910. One of the challenges in this appraisal is that traditionally these assessments are confined to specific denominations (Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran, Orthodox, etc.). Rarely are all Christian traditions combined such as they are on these pages. The growth in missionary sending from the Global South is apparent in these pages but lags behind the demographics of church membership.

This report, which is also available as a separate offprint, was prepared by the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts. Todd M. Johnson, David B. Barrett, and Peter F. Crossing compiled this report, with assistance from Gina Bellofatto, Bradley Coon, Darrell Dorr, Chris Guidry, Albert Hickman, Sandra Lee, and Kenneth Ross. More samples from the Atlas of Global Christianity, as well as footnotes for the table "Status of Global Mission," can be found at www.globalchristianity.org.

World Christianity, 1910–2010

The next two pages offer a quick overview of the concentration of Christians around the world in 2010 in the context of the past 100 years. A comparison of the two years 1910 and 2010 is displayed in the line graph, the maps, and the tables. In areas that were strongly Christian in 1910 (Europe, Latin America, Northern America, and Oceania, except for Melanesia) the main trend appears to be secularization, with percentages of Christians decreasing over the 100 years. In Africa and Asia, most regions saw a profound transformation in terms of Christian growth. One can quickly see that the most dramatic changes in the period occurred in Africa as a whole, which was only 9 percent Christian in 1910 but nearly 50 percent Christian by 2010. Middle Africa experienced the greatest change, going from only 1 percent Christian in 1910 to over 80 percent Christian in 2010. In the atlas these demographic changes are put in context in narratives written by Christian scholars from each continent and region.

One interesting observation is that, despite all of these changes within global Christianity, the percentage of the world's population that is Christian has changed little over the 100 years, declining slightly from 34.8 percent in 1910 to 33.2 percent in 2010. Our analysis of future trends, however, shows that the steady decline of Christianity in the Global North is just now being surpassed by the rise of Christianity in the Global South. We project that the world will likely be 33.8 percent Christian by 2025, and 35 percent by 2050.

Personal Contact, 2010

A new area of research is assessing the amount of personal contact between Christians and non-Christians. In simple terms, the question being asked is, What percentage of non-Christians personally know a Christian? Data from our earlier analyses of evangelization were used to provide rough approximations of the answer. The results are startling, in the sense that Christians and non-Christians appear to be living in quite separate worlds. This distance has implications for Christian missions but is also problematic when it comes to dialogue, peace initiatives, environmental and health challenges, and many other areas of human interaction. Our hope is that highlighting the problem will help in planning solutions for the future.

Status of Global Mission, 2010

Finally, regular readers of the January *IBMR* issue will recognize our "Status of Global Mission" table. This year a few findings stand out. Buddhists, experiencing a resurgence in China (line 14), now outrank Chinese folk-religionists in order of size of religions globally. Protestants (line 30) are once again larger than Independents (due mainly to reclassification of some Independents). Based on new data on house churches, we have increased our estimate for the number of congregations in 2025 (line 42). We updated our Christian finance figures (reflecting inflation) for the *Atlas of Global Christianity*, and these appear on lines 51–57. Note that ecclesiastical crime (line 56), at \$32 billion this year, still outranks giving to foreign missions, at \$29 billion (line 57). Finally, our estimate for the unevangelized population continues to increase for the future, as Christian resources are focused mainly on the already evangelized.

World Christianity, 1910–2010

The map to the right depicts the percentage of Christians in each province or state in 2010. Presenting the data in this way reveals patterns that are obscured in a country-level depiction. For example, the percentages of Christians among the total populations of Egypt and Sudan are comparable. Depicting these data only on the country level, however, would mask both (1) the strong variation in Christian percentages among provinces within each country and (2) the fact that Sudan has a much greater inter-province variation than does Egypt. Similarly, India has a far lower percentage of Christians than does France. Individual provinces in India, however, have larger percentages of Christians than most of, or even any province in, France.

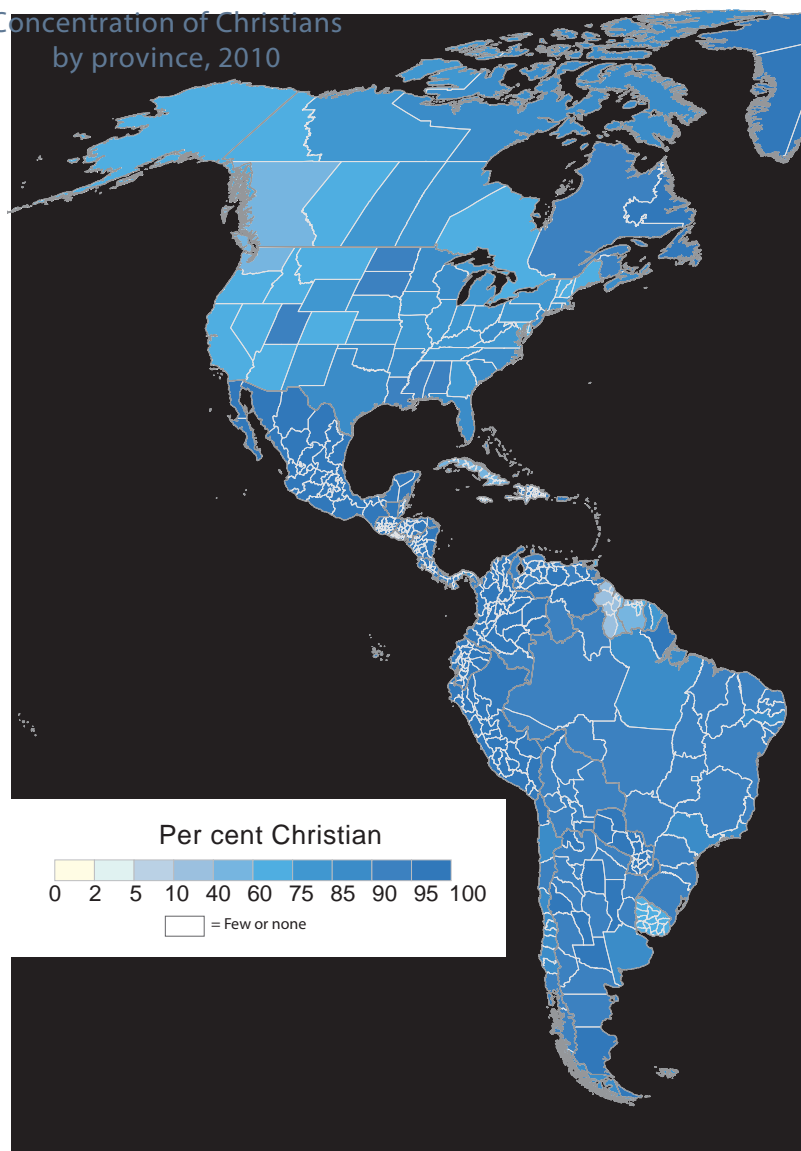
Percentages tell only one part of the story, of course. A significant factor to remember when interpreting the province-level data on the largest map on this page is population per province. For example, a province whose population of two million are all Christians is home to fewer total Christians than a province of 22 million that is only 10% Christian. The map to the right does show the relative strength of Christianity in its provincial and national context. This is most useful in comparing the concentration of Christians globally.

The smaller map on this page shows the percentage of Christians in each of the world's countries in 1910. Despite the major global changes in the distribution of Christians over the last century, Christians still represent approximately one-third of the world's population: 34.8% of the global population in 1910, decreasing slightly to 33.2% in 2010. This is because the growth of Christianity in Africa and Asia has been offset by its relative decline (as a percentage of adherents, although usually not in absolute numbers) in most of the rest of the world. Northern America's percentage of Christians, for example, decreased by 15.4 percentage points over the past century, and Europe's decreased by 14.3 percentage points. Africa's, on the other hand, increased by 38.5 percentage points between 1910 and 2010.

In 1910 nine of the ten countries with the most Christians were in the North; the exception was Brazil. The shift of Christianity southward over the following century has left the USA, Russia, and Germany as the only Northern countries on the comparable list for 2010.

Seven countries had no reported Christians in 1910, but in 2010 Christians are present in each of the world's 239 countries. Of the ten countries with the fastest Christian growth between 1910 and 2010, six are in Africa and four in Asia.

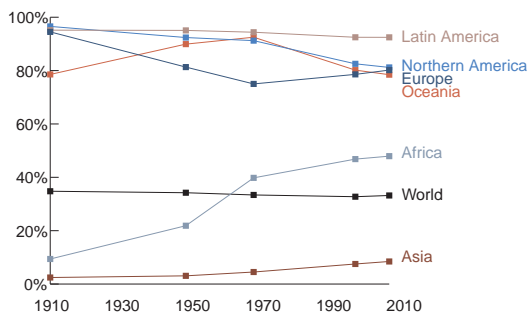
Concentration of Christians by province, 2010



▲ Shift of Christians, 1910–2010

Over the past 100 years Christianity has experienced a profound shift in its ethnic and linguistic composition. In 1910 over 80% of all Christians lived in Europe and Northern America. By 2010 this has fallen to less than 40%, with the majority of Christians located in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

What does it mean for the future of Christianity that its center of gravity continues to move south and east? Three areas can be mentioned briefly here: (1) Southern Christians will move beyond Northern Christianity's recent dominance in theology and ecclesiology by producing their own reflections and by looking back to the earliest Christian centuries, when they were in the majority. (2) The dominant languages of Christianity are shifting south. Already by 1980, Spanish was the leading language of church membership in the world. (3) Christians are in increasingly close contact with Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. This will potentially intensify both conflict and dialogue.



▲ Concentration of Christians by continent, 1910–2010

Although the "World" line on the graph above does not seem to indicate any great change in global Christianity over the past century, the internal demographic make-up of Christianity in fact has changed dramatically.

Latin America, Northern America, and Europe all started out in 1910 at almost 100% Christian, but in 2010 only Latin America retains such a high percentage. Northern America and Europe have dropped to around 80% Christian, and Oceania has returned to that level from its peak toward mid-century. Christianity in Africa had the most drastic change of any continent, growing from a mere 9% Christian in 1910 to almost 50% in 2010. Asia's change, though small in terms of proportion (from 2% Christian in 1910 to just 9% in 2010), still represents strong growth in absolute numbers, especially since 1950. The growth of Christianity in Africa (and, to an extent, Asia) is what held the global Christian percentage steady between 1970 and 2010.

