

**The Other Camp of the Saints:
Comparing Christian and Muslim Narratives of Global
Expansion in the Modern Era**

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My title demands some explanation. In 1973, Jean Raspail published the book *The Camp of the Saints*, a futuristic fantasy that has subsequently become a cult classic for the far Right on both sides of the Atlantic. Raspail imagines how the Third World's black and brown people invade and overwhelm the White North, which has been rendered defenseless by the rise of gutless Western liberalism.

Obviously, I am drawing nothing from the book's politics, but its underlying ideas do look startling in retrospect. For one thing, it is incredible now to think that a book published so relatively recently would fail to present its apocalyptic thesis in the religious terms that we now find so familiar. In recent years, the book has been quoted ever more widely as Europe's growing Muslim populations have become more visible, but that Muslim element is nowhere in its pages. The Asian masses of *Camp of the Saints* are explicitly fighting to erase Europe's failed God, and passages from the biblical book of Revelation are scattered throughout the work; but they have no alternative of their own, and are not fighting for Allah or Krishna. They are waging race war, not jihad.

In different ways, the narrative of a West being overwhelmed by the religion of what we would now call the Global South (a term coined in 1980) has subsequently become familiar among both Christians and Muslims. The political lines, however, break down in curious ways. There are certainly Christians who look to the rising masses of Africa and Asia to reaffirm and strengthen their own traditional views, especially in matters of morality and sexuality. Such conservatives happily await the arrival of a camp of authentic saints, black and brown Christians who cannot come soon enough. Some Muslims too, by no means only extremists, hope that rising Muslim numbers will contribute to the spread of Islam throughout Europe. In their respective ways, each narrative assumes a failed West that will be redeemed – rather than conquered – by a purified South. The conquest, such as it is, is to be spiritual.

Such an approach makes certain demands on the narrative. The religion's growth must be explosive, unprecedented and unexpected, and ideally, it should emphasize human decision rather than accident – it should stress conversions more than demography. But in either instance, the story must be unique. “Our” growth must be the greatest of its kind. And that narrative works until “we” meet the other religion, those other saints in their other camp, who also boast uniqueness.

Among Wikipedia's many advantages over traditional encyclopedias, it is much more flexible and innovative in its approach to topics covered, and some of the headings can be genuinely surprising. I particularly like the entry on “Claims to be the Fastest-Growing Religion”, which collects many such claims, which variously award the prize to Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, the Falun Gong, Scientology, and other competitors. Obviously, even compiling such a list suggests the tongue in cheek implication that most such claims, at least, are bogus or misinformed. But considering such a discussion does raise a

significant point about religions in general, namely that accurate quantitative information about any faith is hard to come by, and any plausible comparisons are exceedingly difficult. Wisely, scholars who know the problems in assessing the figures for any one faith are nervous about daring to make comparisons, about trying to illuminate *obscurum per obscurius*.

While respecting such concerns, the lack of comparison also has its own drawbacks, in allowing members of different religions to tell their stories in isolation, without a sense of wider context. This raises the danger of describing events in one tradition as if they were distinctive or even unique, whereas in reality they had close contemporary parallels in other faiths. Assume for the sake of argument that we writing from a Christian point of view, about trends in Christian history, and we note what appears to be spectacular growth and expansion: from a comparative perspective, we have to ask a simple question: compared to what? The answers can be instructive and even sobering, and not in such a simplistic matter as winning the prize for fastest growing religion!

What happens, then, if we compare the story of Christian growth in the modern era with that of Islam? How does such a comparative approach affect our sense of the relative successes or tribulations of the two faiths? Above all, are there ways in which the experience of one religion can cast light on that of the other, or raise questions about the directions of research?

I should say at the beginning that I will be making considerable use of the valuable resources supplied by the World Christian Database (WCD). As a broad guide to the overall religious picture, the Database is reliable, although I have difficulty in accepting the exact validity of these numbers, especially in certain regions. (I will discuss these issues at greater length in Appendix I)

Christianity Moves South

The story of Christian expansion over the past century or so is now well known. Briefly, Christian numbers have remained fairly constant in the traditional heartlands of Europe and North America, while booming spectacularly elsewhere. As I illustrate in Table I, growth has been particularly marked in Africa, above all, but also in Asia and Latin America.

The most important trend we notice from these figures is, of course, the precipitous *relative* decline of North America and Europe as Christian heartlands. This does not mean that Christian numbers in these regions have declined, quite the contrary. Rather, these religious blocs have been overwhelmed by the relative growth of Christian numbers elsewhere, above all in those regions that have since the 1980s been known as the Global South – that is, the continents of Africa, Asia and Latin America. According to the evidence presented by the WCD, between 1900 and 2010, the number of Christians in Europe grew by 29 percent, a substantial figure. In Africa, though, the absolute number of recorded believers grew in the same period by an incredible 4,930 percent. The comparable growth in Latin America was 877 percent. The growth for particular

denominations was even more startling. During the twentieth century, Africa's Catholic population grew from 1.9 million to 130 million—an increase of 6,708 percent.

The number of African believers soared, from just 10 million in 1900 to 500 million by 2015 or so, and (if projections are correct) to an astonishing billion by 2050. Put another way, the number of African Christians in 2050 will be almost twice as large as the total figure for all Christians alive anywhere in the globe back in 1900.

Twentieth century Christianity was decidedly a Euro-American faith. Combining Christian numbers in Europe and North America, these continents accounted for 82 percent of all believers in 1900, and even by 1970, that figure had fallen only to 57 percent. Since that point however, change has been very marked. Today, Euro-American Christians make up 38 percent of the worldwide total, and that figure could reach a mere 27 percent by 2050.

Actually, even those figures gravely understate the scale of the change, because the Christians listed as “European” or “North American” today include large communities from the Global South. By 2050, for instance, perhaps a quarter of the people of the USA will have roots in Latin America, and fifty or sixty million Americans will claim a Mexican heritage. Another eight percent of Americans will have Asian ancestry, and usually those communities – Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese – have strong Christian elements. In Europe also, those enduring Christian populations will include sizable immigrant communities – African, Asian and Afro-Caribbean. In 2050, therefore, even our “Euro-American” Christians will include Congolese believers living in Paris, or Koreans in Los Angeles.

If we envisage the Christianity of the mid-21st century, then at least in numerical terms, we have to think of a faith located much nearer the Equator. Again according to WCD statistics, by far the largest share of the world's Christian population in 2050 will be African, with 32 percent of the global total. South Americans will make up 21 percent of the whole, a number that grows if we include people of Latino origin in North America. In short, well over half of all Christians alive in 2050 will be either African or Latin American. When we recall the distribution of Christians as recently as 1970, that is an incredible global change to occur in basically just two or three generations. It is not surprising that some Christian observers speak of a New Pentecost, an outpouring of the Spirit on all nations.

The Growth of Islam

But how do such figures look when we compare the development of Islam in the same era? The answer is quite surprising. Both religions have acquired vastly more adherents in the past century, but in some ways, Muslims have significantly outpaced Christians. When considered as a share of global population, Christian numbers have proved strikingly stable over the past century. In the year 1900, about one-third of the world's people were Christians, and that proportion remains more or less unchanged today.

Moreover, if we project our estimate forward to the year 2050, that proportion should still be about one third.

But if we look at Muslim numbers in the same terms, as a share of global the world's people, then that religion has enjoyed a far more impressive surge. In 1900, the 200- 220 million Muslims then living comprised some twelve or thirteen percent of humanity, compared to 22.5 percent today, and a projected figure of 27.3 percent by 2050. Put another way, Christians in 1900 outnumbered Muslims by 2.8 to 1. Today the figure is 1.5 to 1, and by 2050 it should be 1.3 to 1.

Put another way, there are four times as many Christians alive as there were in 1900; but over the same period, Muslims have grown at least seven-fold.

Differential Demographics

So how can Christian numbers be exploding, but still be left so far behind Muslims in the rate of expansion? A large part of the answer lies in differential demographics, namely that some parts of the world are growing much faster than others. Briefly, European numbers have been growing very slowly indeed in comparison with those of Africa, Asia and Latin America, and that is very good news indeed for a faith based chiefly in Asia and Africa, as Islam was historically.

Let us for a moment leave aside religious affiliations, and look just at raw numbers. Back in 1900, Europeans made up around a quarter of the world's population. By 2050, that number will probably be closer to eight percent. Africa in contrast had around 130 million people in 1900. That number passed the billion mark by 2005, and by 2050 the number could reach anywhere from 2 to 2.25 billion. Just to take one example, in the lands that would become Kenya, the population in 1900 was a mere one million, but that figure has now swollen to around 40 million, in little over a century. By 2050, Kenya could have 80 million people or more. In 1900, there were three Europeans for every African. By 2050, there should be three Africans for every European. If a faith attracted the loyalty of a certain number of Africans (say) in 1900, and merely kept that market share, then that faith would be very much stronger in numerical terms. And in part, that is the story of Islam over the past century.

Islamic Demographics

We can see the expansion in any part of the Islamic world. In 1900, Muslims made up perhaps nine million of Egypt's ten million people. Today, the proportion of Muslims is certainly higher, but the overall population has swelled from ten million to perhaps 79 million. Iran has experienced comparable growth, from 10 million in 1900 to 66 or 70 million today. As Muslims comprise the overwhelming mass of that nation, that represents a huge gain in Islamic numbers.

Indonesia presents a similar case. In 1900, the Dutch East Indies had a population of around 42 million, rising to 70 million by 1940 and 150 million by 1980. (From 1949, the

country became known as Indonesia). Today the total population is estimated at 240 million. While we do not have detailed religious statistics for earlier years, the best contemporary estimate suggests that around 80 percent of Indonesians are Muslim. Let me take a bold and probably questionable step and assume that that figure also held good in earlier eras. That would have meant that the number of Muslims in this region would have grown, roughly, from 34 million in 1900 to 56 million in 1940, 120 million by 1980, and 190 million today. I do not defend the precise accuracy of this figure, nor the assumption that rates of Islamic loyalty would have remained precisely steady over the past century. Obviously they did not, and what I am offering is a working assumption. However, the basic point remains. Since 1900, Muslim numbers have increased dramatically in the Dutch East Indies/Indonesia, from around 34 million to 190 million.

Put another way, the number of Muslims just in Indonesia today is not far short for what the *global* total was back in 1900.

The Indian sub-continent offers another example of expansion. In 1900, Muslims were a major component of the population of British India, concentrated in what would be the later states of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. This area contained at least 65 million Muslims, perhaps as many as 80 million. Today, however, the same region has between 450 and 480 million Muslims, a rate of increase quite comparable to that in Indonesia.

In large measure, then, Muslim growth occurred because Muslims were concentrated in those regions that maintained very high fertility rates throughout the twentieth century. A rising tide lifts all religions.

Conversions

Now, that is by no means the whole story. For both Christians and Muslims, demographic growth was vastly reinforced by evangelism and conversions, a story in which Christians won significantly greater successes.

Let us for instance look at the lands that became Nigeria. In 1900, these territories had around 16 million inhabitants, who included 4.2 million Muslims and around 180,000 Christians. Muslims, in other words, represented 26 percent of the population, compared to about one percent for Christians. By 1970, however, Muslims outnumbered Christians very slightly – by 41 percent of the population, as opposed to 40 percent. As a share of population, the number of Christians had grown forty-fold during this seventy years period. As differential demographic rates played no apparent role in this transformation, what we are seeing is a solid rate of conversions to Islam, compared to an overwhelming mass conversion to Christianity, concentrated among certain peoples, especially the Igbo. Today, both faiths command the loyalty of about 45 percent of Nigerians.

Stressing demographic change must not distract us from the very real success of Christian missions in spreading at least the seeds of faith, which in many areas would produce harvests far beyond the wildest expectations of the sowers. It is a token of their success that Christian efforts attracted such fervent resistance in many areas, but also emulation.

In the Muslim world, this meant the revival of Dawa, the “Call” of faith, which in the early twentieth century was associated with such names as Rashid Rida (1865-1935) in Egypt, and the Sufi thinker Maulana Muhammad Ilyas (1885-1944) in British India. In the 1920s, Maulana Ilyas began the *Tablighi Jamaat*, which in Christian terms would become a worldwide missionary movement still very active to the present day. Driving such efforts was genuine fear of Christian successes and admiration of their techniques – however limited the successes that such missions might have had in converting Muslims specifically.

However we tell the story then – whatever emphasis we place on conversions as opposed to birth rates – there is no doubt that the southward shift of population is critical to understanding global religious change. Put another way, let us imagine what the picture of Christian expansion would look like if we took Europe out of the story. (I mean just the land-mass of Europe, rather than people of European stock throughout the world). The number of non-European Christians in 1900 would be about 180 million, compared to 1.7 billion today, or 9.5 times as many. That represents a growth rate for the century larger than that of Islam.

If we are asked about the fastest growing religion in modern history, then, we can answer unequivocally: Christianity! And Islam!

New Areas of Growth

In Christian history, the main story of the past century has been the huge shift to areas of growth far removed from the traditional heartlands of the faith. Something similar is also true of Islam, which of course originated in the Arab Middle East, but subsequently expanded mightily. By the fourteenth century, Islam was firmly established in East and South Asia, and was growing in North Africa. In modern times, though, these later additions to Dar al-Islam have dwarfed the Arab world. Of the world’s eight most populous countries, only one – Egypt – is Arabic by ethnicity and language. (See Table 3).

When beginning this study, I originally thought I would find a comparable movement within Islam, away from the Arab world towards traditional outliers, in the further reaches of Africa and Asia. In fact I did not, on anything like the Christian model. Although numbers grew in Indonesia and the Indian subcontinent, the proportions of Muslims living in those regions remained fairly stable over time. Islam, then, offers nothing as dramatic as the very rapid movement away from its traditional centers of population, from Europe to Africa. While a movement has occurred, it has been more gradual, and the decisive shift was already in progress centuries ago. The Indian subcontinent comprised about 30 percent of all Muslims in 1900, and they represent a very similar proportion today.

The real change, such as it was, came in Africa. Nigeria illustrates this movement. As we have seen, the Muslim share of that population grew from 26 percent in 1900 to 45 percent today, but that growth in market share gives no idea of the change in absolute

numbers. In 1900, the lands that would comprise Nigeria had around sixteen million, but that population is now 158 million, and that figure could by 2050 be approaching 290 million. The effect on Islamic strength is apparent. Nigeria had four million Muslims in 1900, as against 72 million today. As a share of the whole Muslim world, that proportion grew from two percent in 1900 to almost five percent today. From being a thinly populated outlier on the edges of the Muslim world, Nigeria is increasingly a key player in that realm – just as it is in the emerging Christian world. Demographics and conversions work together.

I would like to generalize this trend, but find it difficult as I do not find reliable estimates for the number of Muslims in Africa at various periods. The WCD suggests that in 1900, the whole continent of Africa had around 35 million Muslims, or 17 percent of the whole. Today that figure has increased to 27 percent, and it may be as much as one-third by 2050. Other sources, however, suggest that Africa's Muslim population was already a good deal higher in 1900 than the WCD postulates, making any such statements questionable. We can indeed speak of relative growth in Africa, its exact scale is hard to determine

Foundations of Faith

Although both faiths shifted their geographical centers of gravity, they grew in different fashions. In most cases, Christian growth in Africa and Asia developed on fresh ground. Of course older Christian traditions existed – the Ethiopian church, and the Thomas Christian traditions of India – but most converts came from animist backgrounds (in Africa particularly) or from roots in other faiths such as Hinduism. They were thus new Christians, in a society without older Christian frameworks.

The Muslim story is of course different, because of the centuries old strength of Islam in Africa, in South and East Asia. Islam in these areas was in no sense a freshly imported religion with foreign connotations, but was a known and respected local reality. Issues of inculturation thus played out in a totally different setting. By the time Muslim numbers swelled in the twentieth century, Africans (for example) had several centuries of experience seeking to accommodate Islam to local realities. Nigerian Muslims proudly recall such distinguished predecessors as the great reforming revolutionary Uthman Dan Fodio, who created the mighty Sokoto Caliphate of the early nineteenth century.

This local tradition was best expressed in the Sufi orders which had played such a central part in the original conversion of these territories centuries before, and which continued to shape Islamic thought and life up to the present day. In North and West Africa for instance, we find the potent faith centered on the marabouts, whose tombs and shrines are so basic a part of the landscape. Uthman Dan Fodio was a teacher of the Qadiriyya school of Sufism.

Religion and Empire

Because of these local roots, Islam and Christianity also occupied very different relationships to the colonial empires that represented a fundamental reality in most of the Islamic world of the early twentieth century. At least in its origins, Christianity was strongly associated with empire, certainly in Africa, and the persistent danger was that it would be regarded as the white man's religion, to endure only as long as those empires did. Islam played a quite different role. Not, certainly, that Islam was of necessity an anti-colonial ideology. Across Asia and Africa, the colonial empires depended absolutely on the loyalty of Muslims, particularly soldiers and civil servants, who found little problem in faithfully serving infidel rulers.

But Islam also had a strong anti-imperial strand that was rooted in Sufi sects and popular Islamic movements. From the late eighteenth century onwards, much of European military history and lore was formed in conflict with Muslim populations – by the British in India, the French in North Africa, the Russians in the Caucasus, the Dutch in the East Indies, the Spanish in Morocco, the Italians in Libya.

From the 1830s onwards, expanding European empires everywhere encountered militant nationalist movements, which were commonly motivated by Islam and the rhetoric of jihad. What the British remember as the Indian Mutiny of 1857 was to thousands of its participants a jihad against the British infidel. In the 1860s, Muslim rebels in southwest China sustained an independent sultanate in rebellion against the Chinese imperial regime, and other Muslim revolts flared elsewhere in China's weakly controlled far West. In 1873, the East Indian sultanate of Aceh began a thirty-year revolution that the Dutch never wholly suppressed. At the height of its success, the Muslim secessionist regime in Aceh was quite as independent of imperial control as was the Mahdist state in Sudan. Among the greatest of the Muslim opponents of empire was Imam Shamil, who fought doggedly against Russian expansion in the Caucasus from 1834 to 1859. His contemporary Abd al-Qadir occupies the same heroic position in the mythology of modern Algeria. In the 1920s, Omar al-Mokhtar led mujahedin resistance against the Italian occupation of Libya, becoming a hero for Libyans and others. Moroccans fondly recall Abd al-Krim, whose forces slaughtered thousands of Spaniards, and whose guerrilla tactics inspired Ho Chi Minh. Across the Muslim world, anti-imperial activism was inextricably linked with specifically Muslim heroes, who explicitly drew their inspiration from the cause of religion.

In some ways, these various movements resemble the forces of contemporary Islamist radicalism, not least in the centrality of the concept of jihad. Nineteenth century Iranian regimes proclaimed the holy quality of their struggles against infidel Russians and British. Then as now, revolutionary movements received the support of Muslim scholars and clergy, and Sufi orders were critical to the organization of radical activities.

These precedents affected the later attitude of Muslim nations towards empire, to the West, and to the Christians whom they often associated with Western imperialism. Muslims, above all, never felt any need to assert their local and patriotic credentials. Although they certainly spawned their own nationalist movements (notably the Chilembwe revolt in Nyasaland in 1915), Christians were slower to identify their cause

with the authentic voice of Africa, or of individual nations. Only when they had developed their own corpus of saints, martyrs and spiritual heroes could they make such an assertion. Christians too certainly outpaced Muslims in developing flourishing indigenous cultures, marked above all by hymns and vernacular literature.

Prophets and Saints

Having said this, we do find some parallels between the modern expansion of both faiths. In both cases, Muslim and Christian, individual spiritual leaders proliferated during the imperial years, and portrayed themselves according to their respective traditions. Christians produced prophets; Muslims became Sufi sheikhs.

The early twentieth century is a critical period in the modern history of Christianity, especially the years around the First World War and the great epidemics that followed that conflict. In Africa, that was the point at which prophets and evangelists took the faith wholeheartedly into their own hands, translating it into local cultures and worship styles, and creating churches thoroughly rooted in African soil. In doing so, they began the mass conversion of the continent. This was for instance the great era of the local “Ethiopian” churches, spawned in response to the victory of the Ethiopian state over invading Italian forces in 1896.

Although we can point to hundreds of Christian evangelists and prophets, a few heroic names stand out, such as Liberia’s William Wadé Harris, and Simon Kimbangu in the Congo. At the time, colonial authorities deeply distrusted the new churches. Chiefly, they feared possible sedition, but they were also wary of any syncretistic mixing of Christianity with animist beliefs. Simon Kimbangu spent thirty years in a Belgian colonial prison; French authorities kicked Harris out of the Ivory Coast. But those churches and their offshoots flourished, and have spread widely across modern Europe.

Among Muslims too, at very much the same time, colonized African communities took that faith into their own hands, packaged it in familiar forms, and made it immensely popular. The best-known Muslim equivalent of the Christian prophets was the saintly Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba (1853-1927), from Senegal. At the end of the nineteenth century, he founded a pious Sufi order called the Mourides, the *Muridiyya*, founded in mystical devotion to God. Cheikh Bamba taught a practical message of hard work, charity and pacifism, founded on the principle “Pray as if you will die tomorrow, and work as if you will live forever.” His movement drew heavily on African roots, with its cultivation of local saints and shrines. Like African Christians, the Mourides stand or fall on their promise of healing in mind and body.

French colonial authorities viewed Cheikh Bamba about as sympathetically as the Belgians saw Simon Kimbangu, and the Cheikh likewise spent long years in custody, whether in exile or under house arrest. But his movement too was vindicated by history. The Mouride Way today claims several million members – about the size of the Kimbanguist church – and like them, Mourides are spread around the globe. Mourides and their order are particularly strong in southern Europe and in American cities.

Globalization and Mainstreaming

If the historical experiences are so different, it is remarkable that the modern histories of Islam and Christianity have so many points of resemblance – at least in the Global South. Despite these disparate origins, the fact of Christianity’s imperial origins and Western connections has clearly not damaged it at all, or stemmed its mass appeal. Both faiths remain very strong throughout the global South, in part because of the extreme weakness of states who could contemplate the many social functions currently supplied by religious groupings.

Also, both faiths have been marked by certain parallel features, including a persistent struggle between native and globalized forms of faith. In the case of Islam, the key new fact has been the ascendancy of new and more stringent religious forms emanating especially from the Arabian peninsular, and reflecting the strict attitudes of Saudi Wahhabism, but also the Indian Deobandi tradition. From 1979, the oil states invested heavily in spreading their particular forms of Islam around the world, in part to compete with the local and more syncretistic forms associated with the Sufis. New mosques proliferated across Africa and Asia, but generally following Arab models rather than the rich local context. In some cases, militant Islamists directly fought and terrorized Sufis, whom they regarded as near-infidels. In a few instances, Sufis fought back very effectively

Such violent intra-faith confrontations have not marked the Christian world, but conflicts between global and local are well known. The closest parallel would be the spread of US-derived models of Pentecostalism and megachurches, which largely overwhelmed the once thriving native-oriented churches, the Ethiopians, Zionists and other AIC’s. As in the Muslim case, the globalized forms enjoyed certain advantages, including vast financial resources; command of the most popular forms of technology, media and communication; and a critical aura of modernity. As for Muslims, Christian churches are drawn towards transnational norms.

Conclusion

I would suggest, then, that both Muslim and Christian narratives are flawed in suggesting the uniqueness of their particular experience, still less any claims to “miraculous” quality or divine guidance. But any consideration of modern historical expansion points to striking parallels between Christianity and Islam, and especially the mixture of demography and evangelism in driving growth. These two stories, the tale of the two camps of saints, are clearly two faces of a single coin. If we are to seek divine motives for the “Rise of the South”, then we have to view it in strictly comparative terms, and if we do that, we must assume that God intends both resurgent Islam and Christianity to sweep the globe on an equal opportunity basis, which I suppose he may. But that gets me into areas of theology far beyond my expertise.

TABLE 1
THE CHANGING DISTRIBUTION OF CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS

	CHRISTIANS (millions)			
	<i>1900</i>	<i>1970</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2050</i>
AFRICA	10	143	493	1,031
ASIA	22	96	352	601
NORTH AMERICA	79	211	286	333
SOUTH AMERICA	62	270	544	655
EUROPE	381	492	588	530
OCEANIA	5	18	28	38
TOTAL	558	1,230	2,291	3,188

SOURCE: World Christian Database, <http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org/wcd/>

TABLE 2
THE CHANGING DISTRIBUTION OF MUSLIMS

	MUSLIMS (millions)			
	<i>1900</i>	<i>1970</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2050</i>
AFRICA	34.5	147	422	816
ASIA	156	415	1,083	1,637
NORTH AMERICA	-	0.8	5.6	11
SOUTH AMERICA	0.05	0.4	1.6	2.8
EUROPE	9	18	40	46
OCEANIA	-	0.07	0.5	1.4
TOTAL	200	581	1,553	2,515

SOURCE: World Christian Database, <http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org/wcd/>

TABLE 3
THE WORLD'S LARGEST MUSLIM NATIONS 2010

<i>Nation</i>	<i>Number of Muslims</i> <i>(millions)</i>
Indonesia	184
Pakistan	178
India	166
Bangla Desh	146
Turkey	74
Iran	74
Egypt	74
Nigeria	72

SOURCE: World Christian Database, <http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org/wcd/>

APPENDIX I**USING THE WORLD CHRISTIAN DATABASE**

I would raise two different kinds of objections to WCD data. I would suggest that the WCD exaggerate the number of Christian believers to be found in traditionally Christian countries that historically supported state churches, which particularly affects our sense of the level of Christian belief in Europe. For example, the WCD gives the number of British Christians as fifty million, which basically comprises every resident of the country not openly identified with some other religion. It certainly suggests nothing about actual Christian practice or commitment, or even the number of people who might admit to some kind of Christian identification, however lukewarm, in a survey. However much Europe's importance in the Christian world seems to have fallen over the past century, the WCD statistics actually understate that decline.

Equally problematic are the WCD estimates for countries where Christianity is strictly regulated or regarded with widespread suspicion by government or rival religious communities. Nobody doubts that countries like India and China have sizable Christian populations over and above portrayed by the official statistics of those nations. But how large are these shadow populations? Many observers would be suspicious of the very large Christian populations implied for China (115 million) and India (58 million). In India, for instance, official government data suggest a Christian population of around 23 million, which everyone knows to be an underestimate. Millions of Christians, especially among the poor, are nervous about openly admitting their faith in the face of potential persecution from fundamentalist Hindu groups. But a consensus of informed estimates puts India's real Christian population at around 40 million, rather than 58 million. Chinese data are even more open to speculation, and the WCD number of 115 million stands at the summit of likely estimates. I personally would place the probable number of Chinese Christians well below that, perhaps at a half of the WCD figure. I may well be wrong, but in this matter, neither I nor the scholars of the WCD really have any firm data on which to rely.