

Study notes encouraging trends in global Christianity

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Christianity is growing around the world, especially in the global South, according to recently released analysis.

The Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary regularly updates a report tracking statistics and trends of religion in general and Christianity specifically around the world.

The study notes seven encouraging trends in the [2022 Status of Global Christianity report](#).

Religious faith is growing faster than the irreligious.

Particularly in the West, it can seem as if secularism is growing, and people are leaving the church and the faith. Globally, that is not the case.

While populations of all religions are growing at a 1.27 percent rate, the growth rate of the religiously unaffiliated is less than half that—0.52 percent, well below the total population growth percentage. In particular, atheism is almost stagnant, growing only 0.18 percent per year. A 2015 Pew Research study also predicts the number of unaffiliated will shrink in terms of the share of global population.

According to the Gordon-Conwell report, there are fewer atheists around the world today (147 million) than in 1970 (165 million), with the number expected to continue declining through 2050.

Christianity continues to grow.

Not only is religion growing overall, but Christianity specifically is growing. With a 1.17 percent growth rate, almost 2.56 billion people will identify as a Christian by the middle of 2022. By 2050, that number will top 3.33 billion.

Catholics remain the largest Christian group with almost 1.26 billion adherents, but the two fastest growing Christian groups around the world are evangelicals (1.8 percent growth rate) and charismatics (1.88 percent).

The dramatic global growth for charismatic Christians particularly is noteworthy. In 1900, less than 1 million people around the world were considered Pentecostals. By 2050, more than 1 billion will be.

Growth is fastest in the global South.

The places where Christianity is growing the fastest? Africa (2.77 percent growth) and Asia (1.50 percent). In 2000, 814 million Christians lived in Europe and North America, while 660 million Christians called Africa and Asia home. This year, 838 million live in the global North, while almost 1.1 billion Christians live in Africa and Asia alone.

In 1900, twice as many Christians lived in Europe than the rest of the world combined. Today, more Christians live in Africa than any other continent. By 2050, Africa will be home to almost 1.3 billion Christians, while Latin America (686 million) and Asia (560 million) will both have more than Europe (497 million) and North America (276 million).

Christianity continues to spread out.

As Christianity continues to grow in the global South, it is also becoming

less concentrated in highly Christian areas. In 1900, 95 percent of all Christians lived in a majority Christian country. In 2022, that number has fallen to 53.7 percent. By 2050, most Christians (50.4 percent) around the world will live in non-majority Christian nations.

The percentage of non-Christians who know a Christian is climbing.

With more Christians living outside of Christian nations, more non-Christians know a Christian. In 1900, only 5.4 percent of non-Christians could identify a Christian they knew. That number has grown to 18.3 percent today. By 2050, 1 in 5 non-Christians (20 percent) will know a follower of Jesus and have the opportunity to hear the gospel from them.

As a result, the percentage of unevangelized people around the world continues to fall. In 1900, more than half of the world's population (54.3 percent) was unevangelized. That has now fallen to 28 percent.

More than 90 million Bibles will be printed this year.

As Christianity continues to grow, the printing of Bibles continues to grow along with it. This year, 93 million copies of God's word will be printed, up from 54 million in 2000 and 5 million in 1900. By 2025, 100 million Bibles will be printed each year. Currently, almost 1.8 billion Bibles are in circulation around the world. That will climb to 2.3 billion by 2050.

The Bible continues to expand into new languages in new and exciting ways, including pastors and theologians in India developing and printing a first-of-its-kind Telugu study Bible for the nearly 90 million Telugu speakers in the country.

Fewer Christians are dying for their faith.

In 2000, the Status of Global Christianity marked a rate of 1.6 million Christian martyrs over a 10-year period—the high mark of their report. In 2022, they estimate the decade-long number to be 900,000. Each death is a tragedy, but any improvement is worth noting.

The 10-year trends do not negate year-over-year numbers, like the increase in martyrs for 2021 as recorded by Open Doors' latest report.

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