

Operation World 2001...

Reveals Emerging Global Trends

David Taylor

At first glance it might seem that we are reeling backwards at lightning speed. The previous edition of *Operation World* gave a global total of 488 million Protestants. The current edition lists Protestants at 349 million. What went wrong? How did we lose 139 million Protestants in one decade! Fortunately, they haven't disappeared (and the authors deny any involvement with the *Left Behind* series). But finding them did take a little work.

Patrick Johnstone (and now with a co-author, Jason Mandryk) has done a marvelous job once again at keeping us updated with global statistics and trends. Although this is not the primary purpose of *Operation World*, the tremendous research he has engaged in to mobilize prayer around the world has given us the most accurate look at the global Church's progress from an evangelical perspective. No other mission-oriented book has sold so well, so consistently over the years, and been so influential.

What will the influence be of this latest edition? For many people, they will be looking to *Operation World* to answer the same question, "How are we doing?" Are we making progress in the mission our Lord has given us? What remains to be done? With a few quirks aside, like definition changes and category splits, users will find remarkable consistency in the focus and message of *Operation World*: God is building his Church and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it.

The statistical baseline of the present edition is the year 2000, making it a fitting tribute to the influence and power of Christ's presence in our world after two millennia of gospel proclamation. From the praises of angels among shepherds at Bethlehem, to the songs of praise in millions of chapels and cathedrals around the world, the steady progress of faith in Jesus Christ is clearly and irrefutably demonstrated in *Operation World 2001*.

Evangelical Growth:

Operation World documents that evangelicals are growing at 4.7% annually, making them the fastest-

growing movement in the mega-religion category, or those with over 100 million members. Excluding biological growth, an average of six million people were added to Evangelical churches each year in the last decade. All together, Evangelicals grew from around 300 million in 1990 to 420 million at the close of the 20th century. About 17 million Roman Catholic and Orthodox "Evangelicals" are included in this total. The remaining 403 million come from groups that flow from the Protestant Reformation tradition.

About 40% of Evangelicals are not connected with a western denomination or organization and are included under the category "Independent." These groups have largely attempted to de-westernize Christianity, but nonetheless their indebtedness to the pioneering efforts of missionaries is still very significant. With this in mind, it is important to note that about 80% of Evangelicals are the result of Protestant missionary efforts and influence over the last two centuries. To those who told William

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Carey to sit down and keep quiet, we can only conclude with a smile that God is still not willing that one soul should perish. As always, the success of missions is the greatest argument in its favor.

Changing Religious Pie

If current growth rates continue, Islam will replace Christianity as the world's largest religion in the year 2060. On the other hand, if the last century has taught us anything, making predictions based on current trends can be a hazardous practice. Islam began the 20th century with 12% of the world's total population and ended with

21%. In contrast, Christianity declined from 34.5% in the year 1900 to 32.5% in the year 2000. By way of percentages, the Christian Century turned out to be the Muslim Century. Losses to secularism, liberalism, Communism, massacres, and slow birth rates have all contributed to the overall percentage decline. Although Evangelicals have grown rapidly, much of their growth has been within historic Christian traditions. The main exception to this is China.

It is important to keep in mind that this decline is not necessarily unhealthy. In China, for example, the Church lost many members at the outset of Mao's revolution. But this refining produced a Church that is now one of the fastest growing in the world. The last century saw some of the most traumatic events in history, most of which had a direct impact on Christianity. But despite the obstacles, more peoples have heard the gospel this century than in all other centuries combined. Sounds like something straight from Matthew 24!

Evangelical Distribution

Ratios of non-evangelicals to Evangelicals are shrinking in many countries. But in many "10/40 Window" countries the situation is still very bleak. 35 countries have ratios of 300+ non-evangelicals to Evangelicals. Consider Somalia, with a ratio of 67,314 non-evangelicals for every one Evangelical. Tunisia is next with 28,192 to 1, and Yemen follows with 14,374 to 1. Contrast these ratios with Kenya and the United States which have only 2 non-evangelicals for every one Evangelical!

In a global village of 12 Evangelicals there would be 2 North Americans, 2 Latin Americans, 3 Africans, 3 Asians, 1 European and 1 Pacific Islander. Although Asians have the highest percentage as a group (32.1% of Evangelicals are Asian), their continent is one of the least-evangelized. Only 3.6% of Asians are Evangelical. Europe is slightly worse with 2.4%. Africa, which was thought to be a Christian continent by AD2000, is only 14.8% Evangelical. North America is by far in the lead with almost one in three being Evangelical.

Missionary Sending

Dramatic shifting in missionary sending is evident from the exhaustive and consistent research Johnstone has done of mission agencies over the last decade. Although research is lacking on the many thousands of smaller non-western agencies and local church initiatives, clear trends emerge from what has been surveyed. Over 2,900 agencies were included in the research, giving us a

fairly significant sample from which to draw reliable conclusions about missionary deployment trends.

Among the agencies surveyed, foreign missionary sending increased from 76,120 in 1990 to 97,732 in 2000. Ten years ago, about 91% of foreign missionaries were sent out from the West. By 2000, this percentage decreased to 79%. Foreign missionary sending increased three-fold from Non-Western countries in spite of very difficult global economic conditions. Some 64 countries decreased in the total number of foreign missionaries received between 1990 and 2000. Most dramatic were (with decreases in parenthesis) Zaire (-818), Brazil (-416), Taiwan (-318), Pakistan (-249) and the Philippines (-240). As a continent, Europe gained the most foreign missionaries, increasing by over 5,000. Contrast this with Africa, which had a net loss of over 400 foreign missionaries received. Biggest gainers in foreign missionary receiving were (with increases in parentheses) Russia (1,711), United Kingdom (660), India (535), Ukraine (524), and Japan (446).

The most dramatic increase in missionary sending was from South Korea, growing from 2,032 foreign missionaries sent in 1990 to 10,646 by the end of the decade. (It is interesting to note that South Korean churches set a national goal in 1990 of sending out 10,000 missionaries by AD2000!) South Korea is now the second-largest foreign missionary sending nation in the world. The next highest increases for foreign missionary sending from non-western countries were Brazil, which increased by 1,080, and the Philippines, which increased by 678. The U.S. is still the leader by far in missionary sending with over 46,000 missionaries. The U.S. net increase for the

Table 1: Religious Change in 20th Century

Religion	1900 Population & %	2000 Population & %
Christians	558,056,300 34.5%	1,973,000,000 32.5%
Muslims	200,102,200 12.4%	1,279,000,000 21.1%
Nonreligious	2,923,300 0.2%	938,000,000 15.5%
Hindus	203,033,300 12.5%	820,000,000 13.5%
Buddhists	127,159,000 7.8%	400,000,000 6.6%
Chinese Trad. Rel.	450,000,000 27.8%	383,000,000 6.3%
Ethnic Religions	106,339,600 6.6%	176,000,000 2.9%
Other	21,364,000 1.3%	95,000,000 1.6%

Table 2: Distribution of Evangelicals in 2000

Continent	Evang. Pop.	%Tot. Ev.	% of Cont
Africa	116,076,000	27.6%	14.8%
North America	93,813,000	22.3%	30.3%
Latin America	55,000,000	13.1%	10.6%
Europe	17,275,000	4.1%	2.40%
Asia	135,000,000	32.1%	3.60%
Pacific	4,765,000	1.1%	15.20%

decade was over 6,000. In contrast, other traditionally strong sending countries, like Norway, Sweden, Australia and New Zealand, saw significant net decreases in foreign missionary sending.

The Future of *Operation World*

Patrick Johnstone has teamed up with Global Mapping International to get ready for the 21st century. GMI has proved itself to be a cutting-edge partner in delivering electronic content to churches and missionaries over the years. Recent productions include a comprehensive CD on Islam (with dozens of books, articles and maps) and a cooperative effort with SIL to produce the Peoples File CD (with all the latest ethnic and linguistic research on peoples around the world.) Now GMI is using its enormous potential to bring *Operation World* online, both in CD form and the Internet (www.operationworld.org). All the data files which make *Operation World* possible are available on CD. (This analysis for *Mission Frontiers* would not have been possible without these data files.)

The *Operation World* team struggles with balancing

the enormous potential of electronic delivery and the reality that *Operation World* can only move forward with the royalties it receives from sales. One might wish that some foundation or group of churches might help underwrite their research costs and accelerate their efforts. The success of *Operation World* is rightly a matter of Kingdom priority and concern. As you pray for the world remember to pray for Patrick Johnstone and his team. Perhaps no research office in history has ever networked with so many field missionaries and experts so close to the source. *Operation World* has become the definitive authority and the indispensable resource for global missions information.

When might we see another *Operation World* update? No dates are set, but the current estimate is six years under present conditions. Until then we have much to work with and obviously much to do. 🌐

Operation World may be ordered at the discount price of just \$10 from William Carey Library at 1-800-MISSION. If you order three or more you can get it for just \$8.50 each. See the advertisement on page 40 for further details.