

## **Evangelicals in the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

**by Dr Peter Brierley, Senior Lausanne Associate for Research**

*"Facts are the fingers of God. To know the facts is the necessary condition of intelligent interest. Knowledge does not always kindle zeal, but zeal is 'according to knowledge' and will not exist without it. A fire may be fanned with wind, but it must be fed with fuel; and facts are the fuel of this sacred flame, to be gathered, then kindled, by God's Spirit, and then scattered as burning brands, to be as live coals elsewhere."*<sup>1</sup>

**P**repare for a revolution! Two major changes have been in progress in world Christianity across the 20<sup>th</sup> century which will create a big impact on the 21<sup>st</sup> century church:

- The progress towards a Third World domination of Christianity, and
- The progress towards a world Christianity dominated by evangelicals.

These two trends are of course related to each other and impact upon each other. They cannot be separated and in order to examine the second (the prime purpose of this paper) the first may not be ignored.

This paper has been produced at the request of the Administration Committee of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation [LCWE] as it prepares for the 2004 Forum on World Evangelisation. It is intended to give some of the background to the work of the Forum, and is primarily a statistical paper as this is that which I am best able to produce.

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background**

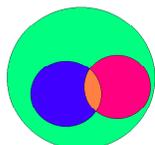
The basis of the trends set out here is Dr David Barrett's hugely valuable *World Christian Encyclopedia* [WCE], the second edition of which was published in two volumes by Oxford University Press in 2001<sup>2</sup>.

The importance of the WCE is that for every country in the world it gives a breakdown of the number of adherents of each religion, with a total which adds up to the full population. So it is easy to calculate the proportions of Christians or Muslims, for example, in a particular country<sup>3</sup>. This information is given for the years 1900, 1970, 1990, 1995, 2000 and 2025. For the overall world total the numbers are also projected to 2050.

In this context "Christians" are defined as:

*Followers of Jesus Christ as Lord, of all kinds, all traditions and confessions, and all degrees of commitment.*

To distinguish this term from others commonly used, some would refer to these numbers as Christian "adherents" or the Christian "community", and recognise sub-groups, especially of membership and attendance, within this broad terminology. The following diagram (not drawn to scale) illustrates the sub-groups, which overlap:



Green	Christian community
Blue	Church members
Red	Regular churchgoers
Yellow	Members who also attend

The three circles in this diagram - the outer circle, and the two overlapping circles inside it - represent three ways of measuring people attached to the church.

The outer circle represents all those who call themselves "Christian" whether or not they belong to a church or go to church. This group includes those who have a firm faith as well as those who may not; people who believe in God, agree with the Ten Commandments or do not support either. They simply wish for whatever reason to call themselves "Christian", and are those which the various national Population Censuses measure.

The two inner circles represent those who are church members and those who are church attenders. They overlap because obviously many churchgoers are also members and vice versa. The diagram shows that there are some members who do not attend church and some churchgoers who are not members. The WCE does give the number of adult members in each country for 1970 and 1995, but these are not used in this paper because forecasts of future trends need to be based on more than two measurements.

There are several other ways of defining groups within the Christian community. Three used by David Barrett, the totals of which tally to the overall total, are:

- **By their "profession"**: This has two categories - "crypto-Christians" [secret believers, hidden Christians, usually known to churches but not to state or secular or non-Christian religious society] and "professing Christians" [all the rest]. This classification is noted, but not used in this paper.

- **By their "affiliation":** Also made up of two categories - "unaffiliated Christians" [people who profess allegiance and commitment to Christ but who have no church affiliation] and "affiliated Christians" [all the rest]. The "affiliated" Christians are further broken down by denomination. This classification is used when denominational breakdowns of numbers are given.
- **By their "belief system":** David Barrett calls these "trans-megabloc groupings". They are: Evangelicals (with a capital 'E')<sup>4</sup>, Pentecostals/Charismatics, and Great Commission Christians.

This third category is the most useful for this paper, because of our focus on evangelicals. In fact, the last group in this category is also defined as "evangelical" (with a small 'e') as follows:

*Church members of evangelical conviction, involved with Christ's mission on earth; synonymous with believers in Jesus Christ who are aware of the implications of Christ's Great Commission, who have accepted its personal challenge in their lives and ministries, are attempting to obey his commands and mandates, and who are seeking to influence the body of Christ to implement it.*

This "evangelical" (or "Great Commission") group is closest to those who follow the Lausanne Covenant and is therefore especially used in the rest of this paper. Apart from *Operation World*<sup>5</sup>, the WCE is the only publication known to the author which gives such numbers for every country in the world.

### **Problems with the figures**

David Barrett's comprehensive analysis is very valuable. However, we need to be aware that not everyone agrees with some of his numbers. Professor Philip Jenkins, for example, in his book *The Next Christendom*<sup>6</sup>, disagrees with some of the estimates. In an article he wrote:

"To take a major example, the *Encyclopaedia* gives India's current Christian population as 62 million, around 6% of the whole. This includes 41 million 'professing Christians' and 21 million 'crypto-Christians.' This overall number is far higher than that reported by Indian census data, which are the figures used by the US government. The *CIA Factbook* says there are around 24 million Indian Christians, and this number is reproduced by the US State Department. Undoubtedly, Indian census counts discriminate against religions held by the underclass, which results in an undercounting of Christian strength. It is far from clear, though whether that undercount can explain the huge discrepancy (almost 40 million people!) that separates our sources here."<sup>7</sup>

Philip Jenkins has also criticised the number of Christians in China (90 million in the WCE) as too high, and the number in Egypt (15 million in WCE) as three times the normally accepted number. Others have also criticised the numbers in the WCE<sup>8</sup>.

One of the reasons behind these criticisms is that David Barrett includes what some call "non-Trinitarians" in his figures for Christians - Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, etc. He also includes a sizeable group (about 6% of the total) who are "unaffiliated", Christians. These have no church

affiliation, which seems almost a contradiction in basic terminology, and raises questions of how these could have been measured.

However, it is perhaps generally accepted that, even if the numbers are sometimes too great, the broad distribution of them across the world, and especially the trends in them, are likely to be as accurate as any other estimates. In any case, there are no others available in such detail. We need to remember these criticisms, and balance them against the fact that there is no alternative but to use them!

Annual updates are published by David Barrett giving his figures for the latest year<sup>9</sup>. In these continental and denominational breakdowns he excludes the unaffiliated, so we have to be careful to compare the correct numbers!

### ***Years used***

David Barrett gives figures for both 1970 and 1990 for every country. This period of 20 years is important for us as both the large Lausanne Congresses were held during that period; in 1974 in Lausanne, Switzerland and in Manila in the Philippines, in 1989. I had the personal privilege of being present at both.

The change in the Christian scene around the world between these dates is usually attributed to the acceptance of many evangelicals of social action as part of the Gospel. This is strongly emphasised in the Lausanne Covenant, a key result of Lausanne I, largely crafted by Rev John Stott, the fifth section of which declares "evangelism and social-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty"<sup>10</sup>.

A second key change among evangelicals in this period was the expansion on their emphasis on reaching "unreached peoples". This also may be attributed to Lausanne I. Peter Wagner was initially appointed as Chair of the Lausanne Strategy Working Group in 1975, but after a few years resigned and Edward Dayton became Chair<sup>11</sup>. As head of MARC, a division of World Vision international, Edward Dayton produced a series of annual "Unreached Peoples Directories" from 1979 to 1984, focussing on the strategic implications of these in a book in 1985<sup>12</sup>. David Barrett contributed to the series with a 1986 volume<sup>13</sup>.

The 2004 Forum is designed to look ahead. As 1970-1990 is a 20 year period, for ease of comparison we have taken the year 2010 as our second date, 20 years on from 1990, based on the estimates made by David Barrett for 1995, 2000 and 2025 (using linear regression, or a straight line fit, as the main estimation method). Further projections again use a 20 year interval to 2030, with a third 20 year period taking us to David Barrett's final 2050 forecast.

### ***World Christianity compared to the population***

It may be helpful to look at the overall population of the world first and to see how this divides into the Third World and what, for simplicity of comparison, I am calling here the First World<sup>14</sup>. This is given in the following Table:

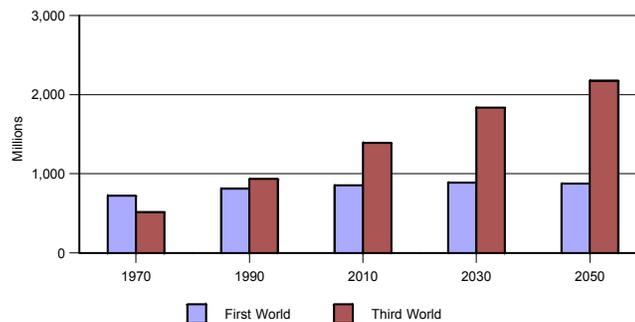
Table 1: Population of the world and the Christian Community, 1970-2050

Year/ Period	<u>Population in millions</u>			<u>Christians in millions</u>			<u>% Christians are of Population</u>		
	First World	Third World	TOTAL	First World	Third World	TOTAL	First World	Third World	TOTAL
1970	907	2,789	3,696	722	514	1,236	80	18	33
1990	1,030	4,236	5,266	813	934	1,747	79	22	33
2010	1,284	5,467	6,751	855	1,390	2,245	67	25	33
2030	1,462	6,646	8,108	887	1,836	2,723	61	28	34
2050	1,546	7,363	8,909	876	2,176	3,052	57	30	34
<i>Daily increase in thousands</i>									
1970-1990	17	198	215	13	57	70	76	29	33
1990-2010	35	168	203	6	62	68	17	37	33

2010-2030	24	162	186	4	61	65	17	38	35
2030-2050	11	99	110	-2	47	45	-18	47	41

The top half of Table 1 shows the population of the world, broken down into its two main components, First World and Third World. These figures are all in millions of people. The second broad vertical band of three columns gives the number of Christians as given by David Barrett in the WCE, or as estimated for the intervening years. They show how the Third World has not only exceeded the First World in total numbers of Christians (fewer in 1970, more in 1990) but is rapidly increasing being almost three times as large by 2050. These numbers are graphed in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Number of Christians in the First and Third Worlds, 1970-2050



The third band of columns in Table 1 expresses the Christian numbers as a percentage of the total. These columns show that while the Christian proportion of the world remains static at 33% or 34%, the reality is of a steadily increasing proportion of the Third World who are Christian, and a fast decreasing proportion of the First World. The rise in the Third World percentage is fairly uniform; however, the percentage who are Christian in the First World decreases especially in the period 1990-2010, that is, the twenty year period we are currently living in. We meet for the 2004 Forum at a time when the Christian proportion of the First World is declining quite rapidly.

The bottom part of Table 1 shows how large that decline is, as it translates the figures in the top portion into the change that is taking place on a daily basis. These figures are in thousands. So, for example, between 1970 and 1990 the world's population increased at the rate of 215,000 people per day. This is a net figure; the number of births would be much greater than this, but these are offset by the number of deaths. A positive figure simply shows that there are many more births than deaths.

Of this 215,000 daily increase, 70,000 or 33% were of Christian people. Again this is a net figure, looking at those who are born into Christian families as well as conversions, offset by those who die and those who drop out of the faith for whatever reason. The 1970 to 1990 years saw a much

greater Christian proportion of the daily increase in world population than has happened since.

However, it is expected to rise again between 2010 and 2030, especially in the Third World, but then fall away after 2030. The expected decline in later years is mainly because the United Nations demographers (whose population figures are used here) believe the European population will begin to decline then. With many European countries having so few children (and some with very high abortion rates), this is quite possible.

## **CHANGE NO 1: THIRD WORLD DOMINATION OF CHRISTIANITY**

### **World Christianity - by continent**

At the beginning of this paper two major changes in world Christianity were indicated. Let us look in more detail at the first, progress towards a Third World domination of Christianity. If you think of European Christianity as one side of a set of scales and Asian and African Christianity on the other, the scales are tipping towards Asia and Africa. In 1900 they had only 6% of the world's Christians. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century that grew to 31% (at 2000), and is now growing so quickly that by 2010, only 10 years later, it is expected to be 42%. In other words, in 6 years time, 3 out of every 7 Christians will live in Asia or Africa.

Table 2 breaks down the middle segment of Table 1 by individual continent, and these are then graphed in Figure 2.

*Table 2: Christian community in millions by continent, 1970-2050*

Year	<u>First World</u>				<u>Third World</u>				<b>WORLD TOTAL</b>
	Europe	North America	Oceania	TOTAL	Latin America	Africa	Asia	TOTAL	
1970	493	211	18	722	269	144	101	514	<b>1,236</b>
1990	550	241	22	813	409	276	249	934	<b>1,747</b>
2010	556	271	28	855	544	472	374	1,390	<b>2,245</b>
2030	554	300	33	887	679	652	505	1,836	<b>2,723</b>
2050	526	314	36	876	776	793	607	2,176	<b>3,052</b>
<i>% of total</i>									
1970	40	17	1	58	22	12	8	42	<b>100</b>
1990	32	14	1	47	23	16	14	53	<b>100</b>
2010	25	12	1	38	24	21	17	62	<b>100</b>
2030	20	11	1	32	25	24	19	68	<b>100</b>
2050	17	10	1	28	26	26	20	72	<b>100</b>

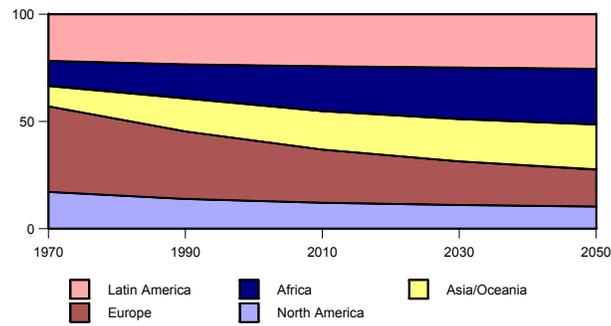
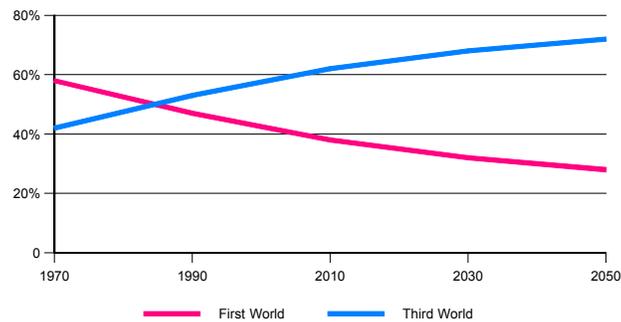


Figure 2: Continental proportions in World Christianity, 1970-2050

The Third World was already over 50% of the world's Christians by 1990 (53%), and by 2010 will be 62%. By 2050, if present trends continue, they will total 72%, nearly three-quarters of Christendom. Figure 3 plots the total percentages for the First and Third Worlds, the First being defined for this purpose as Europe, North America and Oceania.

The story in the bottom half of Table 2, and shown in Figure 2, is that the proportions of Christians in both North and Latin America are changing relatively slowly, while the proportions in Europe, Asia and Africa are changing extremely rapidly.

Figure 3: Proportions of First and Third World Christianity, 1970-2050



This simple graph hides something important. The difference between the two percentages (Third and First World) in 1970 was 16% (seen also in Table 2). In 1990 the difference was 6%, and by 2010 it will be 24%. In 2030 and 2050 it will be 36% and 48% respectively. The differences between these percentages 1970 to 1990 is 10%. Between 1990 and 2010 it is 24%, and then between 2010 and 2030 and 2030 and 2050 it is 12% each. The largest of these differences, 24%, is between 1990 and 2010. This is the period when the change between First and Third World is happening most quickly.

That period is *now, this decade and the one before*. This is the time when the First World must recognise the pre-eminence of the Third World. The change that is happening must be matched by changing resources, methods of

working, responsibilities, training and ideas, as well as leadership of our ministries and organisations.

The dominance of the Third World in world Christianity will continue to increase after 2010, but at a slower pace. The rate of that change is greatest today, which is why the revolution is happening, indeed has already happened! That is why this Forum takes place at such an important time; it is vital to develop strategies and structures which are appropriate for the people movement that has already taken place.

### **World Christianity - by denomination**

The move to Third World domination of Christianity is seen not only when you look at the world by continents but also by denomination. This is given in Table 3, and illustrated in Figure 4:

*Table 3: Christian community in millions by denomination, 1970-2050*

Year	Anglican	Independent	Orthodox	Protestant	Roman Catholic	Marginal	Unaffiliated	<b>WORLD TOTAL</b>
1970	48	96	140	211	624	11	106	<b>1,236</b>
1990	68	302	204	296	753	22	102	<b>1,747</b>
2010	97	460	226	399	910	36	117	<b>2,245</b>
2030	123	627	258	496	1,046	49	124	<b>2,723</b>
2050	146	753	267	574	1,125	62	125	<b>3,052</b>
<i>% of total</i>								
1970	4	8	11	17	50	1	9	<b>100</b>
1990	4	17	12	17	43	1	6	<b>100</b>
2010	4	20	10	18	41	2	5	<b>100</b>
2030	5	23	9	18	38	2	5	<b>100</b>
2050	5	25	9	19	37	2	4	<b>100</b>

*Figure 4: World Christianity by denomination, 1970-2050*

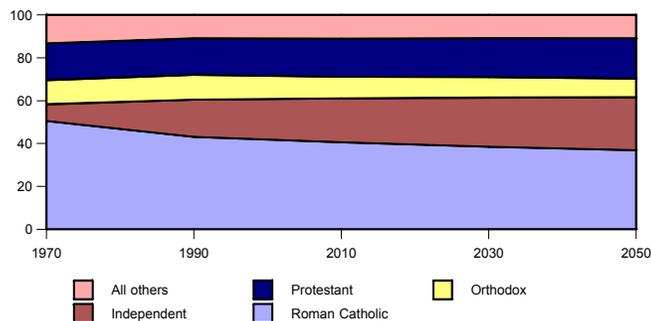


Figure 4 shows:

- The increasing proportion of Christians in the Independent churches across the world,
- The slowly declining proportion of the Roman Catholic Church, and
- The total of the other five groups (Protestant, Orthodox, Anglican, Marginal and Unaffiliated) keep about the same position.

To find the reasons for these changes we have to look at the denominations which are not growing. They are nearly all institutional groups, and such churches have a number of problems:

- They find it hard to change quickly and so cannot easily adapt to changes in society such as post-modernism.
- They have local structures which have been established for hundreds of years, and which cannot therefore be altered easily.
- Their buildings or other property may be legally registered in a way which makes it very difficult to alter them, sell them, or use them for other purposes.
- In many cases they are State churches, and their legal responsibilities cannot be dropped or amended without lengthy discussions. There may be financial responsibilities as with many of the Lutheran State churches.
- They are more likely to see themselves as guardians of the Christian heritage. This sometimes means leaders who are more comfortable looking back to the past rather than forward to the future, though but this is less true than it used to be.
- They are usually broader theologically than the non-institutional churches, and therefore are accountable to a wider range of people for any change.
- Most of them have a hierarchical bureaucracy which can make it really hard to take quick decisions.

The Independent groups are defined as those which are "separated from, uninterested in, and independent of historic denominationalist Christianity." They are therefore mostly free of the problems just listed which seriously limit the institutional churches. Between 1970 and 1990 the Independents doubled their proportion in world Christianity and, if present trends continue, are set to increase by as much again in the 40 years 1990 to 2030.

The Independent groups have grown most in the Third World, moving from 9% of the total in 1970 to 22% in 1990, a percentage projected to grow much more slowly to 29% in 2050. In Africa, for example, they were 12% of the Christian community in 1970, but 23% by 1990; in Asia, they were 21% in 1970 but 46% in 1990.

In the First World, the Independent groups were 6% of the total in 1970, rising to 11% in 1990, forecast to grow steadily to a projected 21% by 2050. In Europe, for example, they were just 2% of the Christian community in 1970, but 4% by 1990.

Figure 5: Proportion of Independents in First and Third World Christianity, 1970-2050

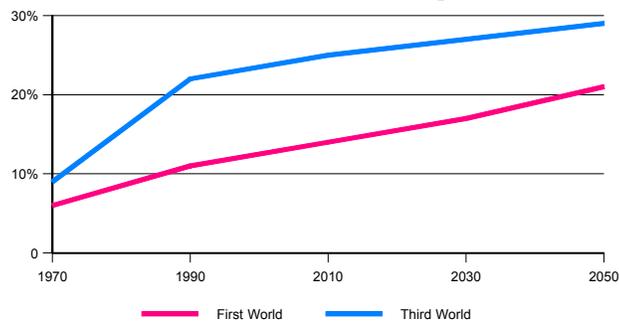


Figure 5 shows the proportion that Independent groups were of the Christian community in the First and Third Worlds since 1970. The greatest difference between the two percentages, 11%, is between 1990 and 2010; before and after that period, the difference is smaller. In other words it is in exactly this same period of 20 years that the Independent churches have grown. It means that the time when their impact and influence in the Third World is greatest *now*.

The proportion of Independents who are evangelical is not given in the WCE. However, from other studies it is known to be high - in England for example, 65% of Independent churchgoers were evangelical in 1989, a percentage which rose to 85% by 1998 (again, growth in the 1990s)<sup>15</sup>.

### **Congregations and Denominations**

There are two other measures in the WCE which illustrate the huge change which has taken place in Third World Christianity: the number of congregations and denominations. These are both given by continent, but only for the years 1970 and 1995. Estimating other figures based on only two points in time is not always reliable, so we have only done so for the years 1990 (between the two measured years) and 2010.

Table 4 shows that the number of congregations has increased much more quickly in the Third World than in the First World over these years. While Third World Christians have been busy starting new congregations, First World Christians have been starting new denominations. The first is a sign of evangelicalism (the group which primarily plants churches), the second a sign of institutionalism. These figures therefore confirm the denominational figures we have just considered.

Table 4: Number of Congregations and Denominations  
in the First and Third Worlds, 1970-2010

<u>Year</u>	<u>Congregations</u>		<u>Denominations</u>	
	<u>First World</u>	<u>Third World</u>	<u>First World</u>	<u>Third World</u>
1970	882,200	567,400	4,780	11,290
1990	1,122,700	1,532,200	9,320	19,310
2010	1,428,900	4,137,400	18,160	33,010
% increase 1970-1990 & 1990-2010	+27	+170	+95	+71

### **Mission workers**

In *Operation World*<sup>16</sup>, Patrick Johnstone gives details of the number of Protestant, Independent and Anglican mission workers, both going to and serving from the various continents. Table 5 compares the number of expatriate or national<sup>17</sup> workers sent from one country to work in another, for the years 1990<sup>18</sup> and 2000.

Table 5: Number of national Mission Workers  
from the First and Third Worlds, 1990-2000

<u>Year</u>	<u>First World</u>				<u>Third World</u>			
	<u>Europe</u>	<u>North America</u>	<u>Pacific</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>Africa</u>	<u>Asia</u>	<u>Latin America</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1990	19,915	64,378	6,211	<b>90,504</b>	12,829	23,958	4,744	<b>41,531</b>
2000	22,897	71,088	9,452	<b>103,437</b>	12,442	69,203	10,192	<b>91,837</b>
% increase 1990-2000	+15	+10	+52	<b>+14</b>	-3	+189	+115	<b>+121</b>

There has been an explosion of Third World mission workers in the 1990s, doubling the number in 1990 and almost equalling the First World total. This is especially seen in Asia, where two-thirds of mission workers serve within or are sent from India, a quadrupling of their numbers over the decade. South Korea also tripled their number.

Note again that the major rise is in the Third World, and that this spectacular increase occurred during the 1990s. There is no reason why the growth should not have continued, although no further figures are available.

## **CHANGE NO 2: DOMINATION BY EVANGELICALS**

### ***Evangelical growth in England***

“Evangelicals poised to take over the church” was the surprise headline in a national UK newspaper in 2003<sup>19</sup>. The report was about the growth of evangelicals within the Church of England between 1989 and 2010. However, the truth is that evangelicals across Britain (not just in the Church of England) have seen their strength grow quite considerably in this period, as Table 6 illustrates:

<i>Table 6: Percentage of churches and churchgoers in England which are evangelical, by denomination, 1989-2010</i>							
		<u>Church of England</u>			<u>Roman Catholics</u>		
		<u>1989</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>2010</u>
	Churches	<b>18%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>5%</b>
	Churchgoers	<b>26%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>14%</b>
Average congregation	Evangelicals	115	95	75	150	430	600
	Non-evangelicals	70	50	30	450	320	190
		<u>All others</u>			<u>TOTAL</u>		
	Churches	<b>58%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>42%</b>
	Churchgoers	<b>62%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>50%</b>
Average congregation	Evangelicals	100	95	85	105	95	90
	Non-evangelicals		85	75	50	135	10065

Table 6 shows that the proportion of evangelicals is growing within all denominations, whether you look at churches or people<sup>20</sup>. It is likely such growth will continue beyond 2010. It also shows that the average congregation is larger in evangelical churches (except for Roman Catholics in 1989), and that this trend is likely to get more pronounced as time moves on.

However, even though the proportion of evangelicals is growing in England, the majority of their congregations are seeing their average numbers decrease, as are non-evangelicals. With decreasing numbers (and presumably also fewer people in the congregation willing to take leadership roles), churches are likely to have to cut back their activities. Even more disastrous is that vision for growth and change is also very likely to decrease.

How typical of the rest of the world is the evangelical growth in England?

### ***Evangelicals in the world***

David Barrett's figures for evangelicals are summarised in Table 7, projected forward for the same years we have used before:

*Table 7: Evangelical Christians in millions by continent, 1970-2050*

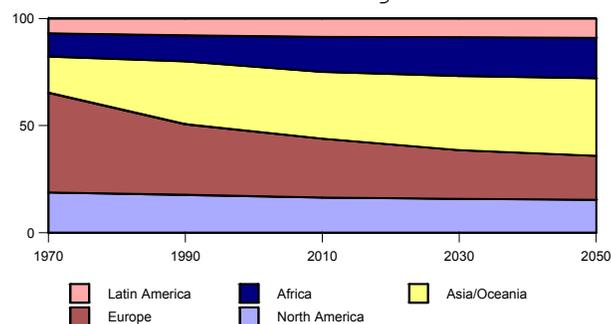
Year	<u>First World</u>				<u>Third World</u>				<b>WORLD TOTAL</b>
	Europe	North America	Oceania	TOTAL	Latin America	Africa	Asia	TOTAL	
1970	129	52	4	185	19	30	43	92	<b>277</b>
1990	185	99	8	292	44	68	157	269	<b>561</b>
2010	201	119	10	330	62	120	217	399	<b>729</b>
2030	211	146	12	369	81	167	310	558	<b>927</b>
2050	226	168	15	409	99	207	382	688	<b>1,097</b>
<i>% of total</i>									
1970	47	19	1	67	7	11	15	33	<b>100</b>
1990	33	18	1	52	8	12	28	48	<b>100</b>
2010	27	16	1	44	9	17	30	56	<b>100</b>
2030	23	16	1	40	9	18	33	60	<b>100</b>
2050	21	15	1	37	9	19	35	63	<b>100</b>

The trends in this Table are very similar to those in Table 2. Africa and Asia's proportion increases, Asia's more than Africa's (the opposite of Table 2), but Europe and North America's proportions drop.

The one continent which is different is Latin America, where the proportion of evangelicals is slowly growing, but it is only a third of the proportion Latin America has of the Christian community. Pentecostalism is growing in Latin America but it has a long way to go before it seriously displaces the huge size of the Roman Catholic Church in that continent.

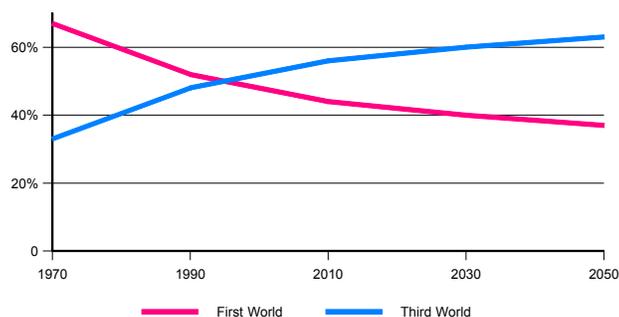
Figure 6 illustrates the figures in Table 7, and may be compared with Figure 2. It shows the increasing importance of Asian evangelicalism, moving from a sixth of the world in 1970 to over a third if current trends continue by 2050.

*Figure 6: Continental breakdown of Evangelical Christianity, 1970-2050*



The proportions relating to the First and Third World are graphed in Figure 7 in a similar way to Figure 3. There is a difference, however. The proportion of evangelicals did not reach dominance in the Third World as quickly as the Christian community generally. The lines in this graph crossed in 1995, 10 years after the lines for the community in Figure 3.

Figure 7: Proportions of First and Third World evangelicals, 1970-2050



This graph shows that Third World evangelicalism really grew rapidly between 1970 and 1990. Could that have had some relation to the social work emphasis enshrined in the Lausanne Covenant produced at the 1974 gathering? Others might see it as the long term results of the impetus given to evangelicalism by Billy Graham from the 1950s onwards.

### ***Evangelical growth across the world***

The figures in Table 7 may be used in another way. The number of evangelicals as a percentage of the Christian community in a particular continent for a given year is shown in Table 8:

Table 8: Percentage of evangelicals in the Christian community by continent 1970-2050

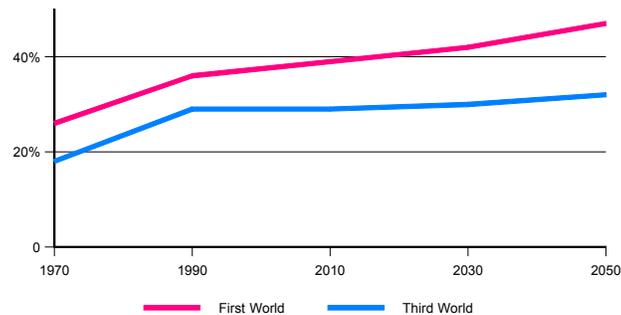
Year	First World				Third World				WORLD TOTAL %
	Europe %	North America %	Oceania %	TOTAL %	Latin America %	Africa %	Asia %	TOTAL %	
1970	26	25	22	25	7	21	43	18	<b>22</b>
1990	34	41	36	36	11	25	63	29	<b>32</b>
2010	36	44	36	39	11	25	58	29	<b>32</b>
2030	38	49	36	42	12	26	61	30	<b>34</b>

2050	43	54	42	47	13	26	63	32	<b>36</b>
------	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	-----------

Table 8 shows that the proportion of evangelicals among Christian people has been growing since 1970. The proportion was just over a fifth, 22%, in 1970, and if present trends continue, is likely to be more than a third, 34%, in 2030. The big increase, as already noted, took place between 1970 and 1990.

However, Table 8 shows that evangelicalism in the Third World is growing quite slowly while in the First World it is growing quickly. Figure 8 graphs the proportion of the community that is evangelical.

*Figure 8: Percentage of the community who are evangelical in the First and Third World, 1970-2050*



This graph shows that the proportion of evangelicals has been higher in the First World than in the Third World over this whole 80 year period, and will continue to be, if present trends continue. The "rapid growth" between 1970 and 1990 happened in both the First and Third Worlds, but since 1990 the percentage has hardly changed in the Third World (about a third of the total), but has been steadily growing in the First World and will reach almost half, 47%, by 2050.

### ***Evangelical and Pentecostal?***

These proportions are all based on the WCE figures, and the period of greatest growth, 1970 to 1990, is taken directly from the *Encyclopedia*. There is other evidence that can be compared with the WCE data. Writers such as David Martin in his excellent assessment of Pentecostalism in Latin America, *Forbidden Revolutions*<sup>21</sup>, give a picture of an ever-increasing evangelicalism. He says it is growing in numbers in Latin America from 44 million in 1990 to 52 million 10 years later, but as a proportion of the total Christian community it remains at 11%.

This needs to be put into context. The World Evangelical Alliance "is in contact with two million local churches with up to 400 million members in 123 countries"<sup>22</sup>. The General Secretary, Gary Edmonds, says the "fastest growth is happening in Latin America. Each year millions of Catholics join Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. In some regions of Brazil, evangelicals account for 40% of the population."<sup>23</sup> Perhaps the difference is

partly one of definition: the WCE counted 80 million Pentecostals in Brazil in 2000, 47% of the population, and 51% of the Christian community, but numbered only 24 million evangelicals.

In Latin America as a whole in 2000 David Barrett records 52 million evangelicals but 141 million Pentecostals/Charismatics. In Africa there were 91 million evangelicals in 2000 according to Barrett but 126 million Pentecostals. In the other four continents the number of evangelicals is greater than his number of Pentecostals/Charismatics.

If we use the number of Pentecostals/Charismatics for Africa and Latin America (assuming that most Pentecostals are evangelical), but the larger evangelical number for the other continents, the percentages in Table 8 change to the following:

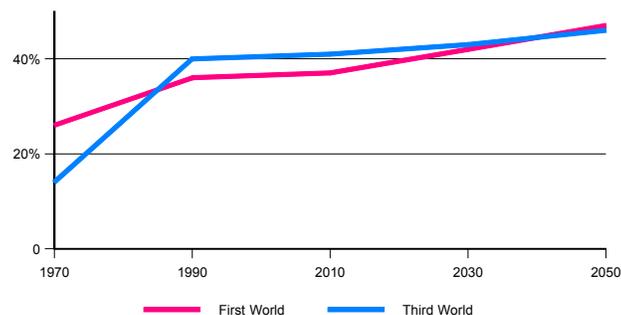
*Table 9: Percentage of evangelicals or Pentecostals/Charismatics in the Christian community by continent 1970-2050*

Year	First World				Third World				WORLD TOTAL %
	Europe %	North America %	Oceania %	TOTAL %	Latin America %	Africa %	Asia %	TOTAL %	
1970	26	25	22	25	4	12	43	14	<b>21</b>
1990	34	41	36	36	29	34	63	40	<b>38</b>
2010	36	44	36	39	31	36	58	41	<b>39</b>
2030	38	49	36	42	35	38	61	43	<b>43</b>
2050	43	54	42	47	39	40	63	46	<b>46</b>

Using these figures gives a steep rise in the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with almost half, 46%, of the Christian community either evangelical or Pentecostal by 2050 if these trends continue. The period we are now in, between 1990 and 2010, sees little change. It is only after 2010 that the proportions are expected to grow considerably<sup>24</sup>. There is also an even bigger rise in the percentages between 1970 and 1990.

These percentages would change the graph given in Figure 9 as follows:

*Figure 9: Percentage of the community who are evangelical or Pentecostal/Charismatic in the First and Third World, 1970-2050*



On these figures, First World experience is very similar to that of the Third World, indicating that the Christian community is indeed becoming more evangelical/Pentecostal in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Unlike the previous revolution, however, this one doesn't really begin for another 15 years!

### ***Evangelical v non-evangelical***

David Barrett gives one further piece of information in the WCE which is important to us. He breaks down the change in the number of adherents in the last decade in the 20<sup>th</sup> century between natural (or 'biological') growth and 'conversion' growth. Thus the number of Christians increased from 1,747.5 million in 1990 to 1,999.6 million in 2000. He estimates this increase of 252 million people was made of 227 million biological increase and 25 million conversion increase. These numbers may be expressed as percentages, shown in Table 10 respectively as 1.29% and 1.04%. Table 10 does two things - it breaks these percentages down between First and Third World, and between evangelicals and non-evangelicals; it also compares them with the overall population.

Table 10: Types of Christian growth

Group	Total World			First World			Third World		
	Biolog- ical growth rate %	Conver- sion growth rate %	TOTAL in millions in 2000	Biolog- ical growth rate %	Conver- sion growth rate %	TOTAL in millions in 2000	Biolog- ical growth rate %	Conver- sion growth rate %	TOTAL in millions in 2000
Evang- elicals	1.27	1.16	648	1.17	1.09	376	1.34	1.22	271
Non-evang- elicals	1.30	-0.08	1,352	1.14	-1.04	469	1.36	1.01	883
Total Christians	1.29	1.04	2,000	1.15	-0.77	845	1.35	1.11	1,154
Total population	1.31	n/a	6,055	1.09	n/a	1,054	1.33	n/a	5,001

The Table shows that the Christian population is increasing annually faster than the world population in both the First and Third Worlds (1.15% is greater than 1.09% in the First World and 1.36% is greater than 1.33% in the Third World). However the overall rate of increase of Christians compared to the world population is slower because there is a negative conversion rate in the First World, that is, people are leaving the Christian faith faster than they are joining it. This loss is sufficiently large to cancel out the overall increase of Christians from biological growth compared to the population generally.

The difference in birth rates between Christians and non-Christians is however very finely balanced, and this is also true between evangelicals and

non-evangelicals. Overall, non-evangelicals have slightly more children than evangelicals, but this is because there are more non-evangelical births in the Third World proportionately than evangelical births. In the First World there are slightly more evangelical births than non-evangelical, but because the numbers in the Third World are greater the overall balance goes the Third World way.

The evangelical conversion rate, however, is positive in the First World and even greater in the Third World. The First World's problem is the non-evangelicals who are leaving, whereas in the Third World the non-evangelicals have a positive conversion rate, though lower than that of evangelicals.

What this all means therefore is that evangelicals are growing across the world, both because of conversions and because of children being born into evangelical families. Of these two causes for growth, the family numbers are slightly greater in both First and Third World.

Non-evangelicals are also growing, biologically far faster than through conversion, and in the First World the numbers leaving the faith are greater than those joining it by conversion. So many are leaving in the First World that they cancel out conversion gains in the Third World. Therefore, across the world as a whole, non-evangelicals are leaving the faith rather than joining it.

Evangelical conversions however are sufficient to outnumber the non-evangelical losses, so that Christianity grows worldwide primarily through children being born into Christian families, but also because overall there is a positive conversion rate.

### **COMPARING THE TWO CHANGES**

We have seen that the same kind of trend is happening in both of the major axes of change. Such uniformity happens in other aspects of global life also. David Smith says it "has led sociologists to employ the term *glocalisation* in order to describe the complex inter-relation ... of both the increasing uniformity of institutions and behaviour around the world and the appearance and growth of rediscovered local identities, cultures and religions."<sup>25</sup>

The danger is that the similarities in the trends lead to the conclusion that the Western, First World, model will dominate. Not at all! The first revolution described in this paper is of an increasing *Third World* Christianity. First World Christianity has enormous problems which the Third World must try to avoid. These problems are explained further by David Smith: "Western Christians need to experience a mental, conceptual and spiritual transformation. ... Received ideas concerning evangelism, which are based on Christendom assumptions that the church and the world share a basically common world-view, simply will no longer do."<sup>26</sup> He quotes the European theologian Hoekendijk:

*"There is nothing left that can be called into memory, nothing that can be awakened."*<sup>27</sup>

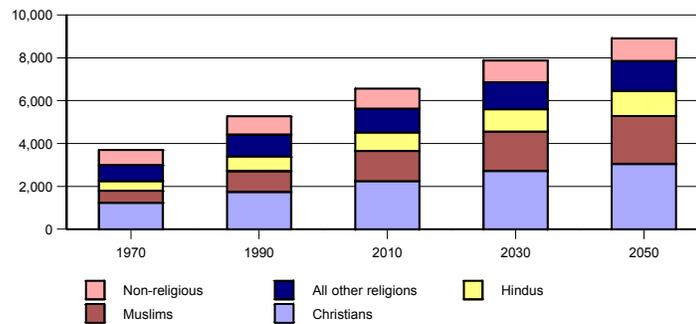
The idea of memory has been taken further by Grace Davie in one of her books on European Christianity<sup>28</sup>.

This argues for a radical approach to church life in the First World, looking for "mission-shaped" churches, or "missional churches" as Professor Eddie Gibbs calls them<sup>29</sup>. There are many books urging radical and strategic thinking<sup>30</sup>. The management guru Tom Peters urges First World Christians to "eradicate 'change' from our vocabulary, and substitute 'revolution'".<sup>31</sup>

### ***Evangelicals are not the only growing body***

David Watson, the British evangelist, once wrote, "the real contest today is between Third World Christianity and Islam."<sup>32</sup> Figure 10 shows how the different religions of the world are changing. It is apparent that Islam faster than the general population increase while the proportion who are Christian remains static at 33%.

Figure 10: The world's religions in millions, 1970-2050



## **CONCLUSIONS**

This paper has demonstrated seven factors which the Lausanne Forum 2004 needs to take seriously:

1) ***Third World Christianity is growing strongly***, and is doing so especially at this present time. In contrast, First World Christianity is declining significantly at present. These two movements counterbalance each other to keep the proportion of the world's population which is Christian the same percentage, 33%.

2) ***The groups that are growing especially are the non-institutional Independent churches***, many of whom are Pentecostal and Charismatic. There are more Independent churches in the Third World than in the First.

3) This Third World growth is supported by a much greater ***increase in the number of congregations, denominations and mission workers*** than in the First World, all of which are closely linked to Independent and evangelical practice.

4) Careful measurement of evangelical growth in England has shown this is beginning to accelerate. It seems likely that ***similar evangelical growth*** could occur also in the world church, especially in the decade or two after 2010.

5) The growth is particularly strong in Asia and Africa, and much less so in Latin America. However measuring the evangelical growth is difficult because David Barrett does not always classify Pentecostals as evangelicals. Including his Pentecostal figures for Asia and Latin America shows an acceleration, indeed an **explosion, of evangelical growth**.

6) It is important on the one hand that **world leadership reflects this Third World evangelicalism**, but at the same time, continued experimentation and variety must be encouraged. There would be nothing worse than a new kind of evangelical institutionalism because of success in certain areas.

7) **Evangelical growth occurs because of children born into Christian families** (and at a slightly faster rate than births generally), **and because of conversions**. Evangelical conversions in the First World more than balance the losses through the number of non-evangelicals leaving the Christian faith.

Careful, wise and strategic leadership is required to take advantage of the opportunities evangelicalism is generating, especially in the Third World, accompanied by a humility to allow the Lord of the Harvest to guide as He wishes. First World structures or thinking must not be imposed on or be allowed to hinder or thwart the wind of the Spirit in the decades ahead.

©Dr Peter Brierley  
 Senior Associate for Research  
 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2004  
 [7,500 words]

#### NOTES

---

1) A T Pierson, editor *Missionary Review of the World*, Minister of Spurgeon's Tabernacle 1891-3, leader in the Student Volunteer Movement, and much else, in his book *The Crisis of Missions*.

2) A third volume was subsequently published by the William Carey Library the same year. Both publications were co-edited by Todd Johnson.

3) In fact the *Encyclopedia* does it for you.

4) These are defined as "A subdivision mainly of Protestants consisting of all affiliated church members calling themselves Evangelicals, or all persons belonging to Evangelical congregations, churches or denominations; characterised by commitment to personal religion."

5) An incredible prayer diary for the world, *Operation World*, 21<sup>st</sup> century edition, is edited by Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk, and published by WEC International, London, and Paternoster Lifestyle, Carlisle, UK also in 2001. It used the same basic database as the WCE.

6) *The Next Christendom*, Professor Philip Jenkins, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 2002.

7) Article "After *The Next Christendom*" in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, OMSC, Connecticut, USA, Volume 28, Number 1, January 2004, Page 21.

8) So, for example, *Future Church*, Dr Peter Brierley, Monarch Publications, Crowborough, East Sussex, UK, 1998, Page 32.

9) In the January issue of the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, OMSC, Connecticut, USA.

10) *New Issues Facing Christians Today*, Rev John Stott, Marshall Pickering, London, UK, 1999, Page 12.

- 
- 11) *On the Crest of the Wave*, Becoming a World Christian, Professor C Peter Wagner, Regal Books, Ventura, California, USA, 1983, Page 18.
  - 12) *The Future of World Evangelization*, Edward Dayton & Sam Wilson, MARC Europe, London, UK, 1985.
  - 13) *Clarifying the Task*, Unreached Peoples Directory 1986, Harley Schreck and Dr David Barrett, MARC Publications, Monrovia, California, USA, 1987.
  - 14) Essentially the “First World” is the same as the Western World, consisting essentially of Europe (the European Union countries and the neutral countries not part of the EU) and North America. The “Second World” was the name given to the Communistic bloc before the USSR fell in 1989, and is not now used.
  - 15) *The Tide is Running Out*, Dr Peter Brierley, Christian Research, London, UK, 2000, Page 150.
  - 16) Op cit (Item 5: *Operation World*), Page 747.
  - 17) National mission workers are defined as those “working within their own home country. This includes field missionaries and also those in a supportive role, but with missionary status.”
  - 18) 1990 figures come from *Operation World*, Patrick Johnstone, OM Publishing, Carlisle, and WEC International, Gerrards Cross, Bucks, UK, 1993, Page 643.
  - 19) *Daily Telegraph*, 25<sup>th</sup> August 2003.
  - 20) And in actual numbers of churches.
  - 21) *Forbidden Revolutions*, Pentecostalism in Latin America, Catholicism in Eastern Europe, Prof David Martin, Gospel & Culture, SPCK, 1996.
  - 22) Report in *idea*, German Evangelical News Agency, English Edition, Volume 3, Number 4, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2003, Page 1.
  - 23) Ibid.
  - 24) The actual figures would be, respectively for Africa, Latin America and Total: 1970 – 17, 12 and 257; 1990 – 94, 119 and 662; 2010 – 168, 168 and 883; 2030 – 245, 235 and 1,159; and 2050 – 321, 302 and 1,414. All figures in millions.
  - 25) *Mission After Christendom*, David Smith, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, UK, 2003, Page 99.
  - 26) Ibid., Page 123.
  - 27) *The Church Inside Out*, J C Hoekendijk, SCM Press, London, UK, 1967.
  - 28) *Religion in Modern Europe*, The Putative Memory, Dr Grace Davie, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 2000.
  - 29) *ChurchNext*, Professor Eddie Gibbs and Rev Dr Ian Coffey, IVP, Nottingham, UK, 2000, Page 225.
  - 30) Including *Coming Up Trumps!*, Four ways into the Future, Dr Peter Brierley, Authentic Media, Carlisle, and Christian Research, London, UK, 2004.
  - 31) Article “Proven Principles for Change Leaders and Managers” by Dr Larry Johnston, in McConkey/Johnston, Inc. Newsletter, Fall 2003, Page 2.
  - 32) *Sex and the City of God*, Gordon Preece, Zadok Paper S125, Winter 2003, Zadok Institute for Christianity and Society, Fitzroy, Australia, Page 11.