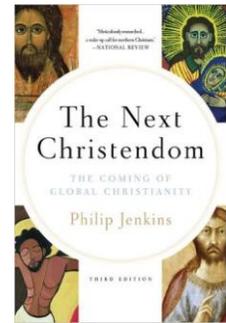


Philip Jenkins

The next Christendom - the coming of global Christianity

OUP 2002
Alison Morgan April 2004



Fascinating and challenging survey, statistically based, on the geography and character of the worldwide church. He makes no claims to prophecy, but his points have far-reaching and thought-provoking implications. His essential point is that the church is moving south where it is much more akin to the early church, and where it parts company from ways the northern church has learnt to think/do things; and that this will create a disturbance, or possibly renewal, in the way we live out our faith.

1. The Christian revolution

We are currently living through one of the transforming moments in the history of religion worldwide. p1. Till now, story of Christianity has been bound up with that of Europe and derived civilisations; Christianity has been the religion of the west – or the global North – the religion of the haves. This is changing; the centre of gravity is shifting southward, to Africa, Asia, Latin America; here are the largest Christian communities, and here the church is expanding. White Christians may become as unusual as Swedish Buddhists. And so: we should think before we make statements about what Christians believe. Which ones? The remnant North, or the majority southern church? In Africa, Christians have increased from 10m in 1900 to 360m in 2000. How much attention do we pay them? How many books do we write about them? Southern churches remain almost invisible to Northern observers. Secular commentators are even less aware.

These statistics carry countless implications for theology and religious practice – look at how Christianity changed when it moved from a Jewish/Hellenistic context into the Germanic lands of W Europe in the early Middle Ages. As it moves southwards, it will be changed by immersion in the prevailing cultures of its host societies. Its members will be poorer, more conservative in beliefs and morals. Southern Christians retain a strong supernatural orientation. Pentecostal and independent churches grow fastest, preaching a deep personal faith and communal orthodoxy, founded on scriptural authority; their messages seem simplistically charismatic, visionary and apocalyptic to a Westerner. Prophecy is an everyday reality, and healing, exorcism and visions are all normal. Perhaps Pentecostalism is the most successful social movement of the C20th – from a handful to several hundred million. *The dominant current in emerging world Christianity is traditionalist, orthodox, and supernatural. p8*

Our Western assumption that life is becoming less religious, that we must adjust to a secular environment by becoming less supernatural and moral, ignores what is happening in the south. Viewed globally, liberalism looks dated – try it on a new church of 10,000 or 20,000 young members in Seoul or Nairobi!

This rising neo-orthodox world is a new Christendom. We live in a world in which the nation state is becoming less and less the global unit of belonging. Perhaps the new Christian world of the South will find unity in common religious beliefs. Already there is some measure of unity in Latin America and in Africa, the 2 main centres of Christianity.

The last Christendom was characterised by intolerance as well as by a common thought world – specially seen in Christian-Muslim relations. Perhaps we will see the same again. But whatever else happens, *there can be no doubt that the emerging Christian world will be anchored in the Southern continents. p14*

2. Disciples of all nations

As I travel, I have observed a pattern, a strange historical phenomenon of God 'moving' geographically from the Middle East, to Europe to North America to the developing world. My theory is this: God goes where he's wanted.
Philip Yancey, p15.

As Christianity moves south, it is returning to its Asian and N African roots. The idea of 'Western Christianity' distorts the faith's true development. It did not start in Jerusalem, spread gradually to Rome-the-centre-of-the-world, get overrun by

Islam. It began in Jerusalem, shown on early maps as the centre of the world with the continents of Europe, Africa & Asia arranged around it; spread in Africa and Asia before Europe (Syria, Egypt, Mesopotamia); by C4 had its centres in the East (Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria and lastly Rome). Christianity has never been synonymous with the West; we just lost contact with the East over the early theological controversies which split the church between Rome and Constantinople. Ethiopia and Armenia were Christian states before Constantine. Christians remained the majority even in lands conquered by Muslims, until 1100-1200. Large Christian populations survived till modern times in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, Turkey. Much of 'Christian' Europe didn't become so till Middle Ages – Russia, Scandinavia, Lithuania. Even by the time of the Crusades, the typical Christian was Syrian or Mesopotamian, not European. More and more Christians found themselves under Muslim rule under the Ottoman Turks as they pressed westward; the image of a predatory Christian West overrunning Muslim lands is not accurate. Even in the age of Shakespeare, Muslim pirates regularly raided the coasts of n and w Europe, taking tens of thousands of Christian slaves. Only at this point, c1500, can it be said that Christianity had become European.

From 1500 Spain and Portugal began a global expansion. The Catholic church went too; and newly planted Christianity in Africa, Asia and S America swiftly acquired local roots. Mexico, Philippines, Congo became Christian only a century after Lithuania completed the conversion of Europe. Latin American Christianity flourished in lay confraternities. The king of Kongo was baptised in 1491; his successors took their faith seriously. Jesuits went to China, Japan, India, and sought to present themselves in culturally accessible ways; but the Vatican clamped down from C18, demanding services in Latin, suppressing Bible translations and local rites. The result – decline in Kongo, Japan, China. Protestants took up the missionary challenge, not breaking new ground as often assumed, but rather reopening ancient and familiar mines – and often receiving a big welcome, as in Kongo in the 1880s. 1765 saw the first African Anglican priest, 1860s the first bishop. Catholics ordained hardly any native priests before 1920.

3. Missionaries and prophets

Many of these churches enjoyed remarkable success, to a degree that is impossible to understand if the new Christians were responding only out of fear or envy of the imperial conquerors. Amazing as it may appear to a brazen West, Christianity exercises an overwhelming global appeal, which shows not the slightest sign of waning. p39

The runaway successes of Christian missions to Africa are all the more striking in view of the poor image that such activities possess in recent W thought; compare the image of Dr Livingstone with eg the film *The Mission* (1986), or *The Poisonwood Bible*. But southern Christianity survived the end of European political power in the colonies; there must have been more to it than the European driven missionary movement. In its early days, African Christianity appealed to the marginalised (see Chinua Achebe's account of the conversion of the Igbo in Nigeria); but what made it successful was the networking effect. Key converts were young and mobile, travelling between ports and cities between 1870 and 1914. It was a youth movement. Ugandans were being ordained by 1890s. The king of Buganda persecuted his Christian subjects, and martyred them; this was not a white religion. Ngugi wa Thiongo describes conversion of the Gikuyu in Kenya in 1920s. In Africa a common pattern was for an enthusiastic new convert to become estranged from a mission church, receive a revelation from God, begin a prophetic ministry and found an independent church. Eg William Wade Harris in Liberia, converting 200,000 people in 2 years, carrying a Bible, a bamboo cross and a gourd rattle. Unlike European missionaries, he took fetishes and cult shrines seriously, and condemned witchcraft; and didn't condemn polygamy. Another was Simon Kimbangu in Congo. In Africa there have been overlapping revival and prophetic movements ever since the early years of the C20th, resulting in the African independent churches.

4. Standing alone

World Christian Encyclopaedia – 8.4m new Christians pa in Africa, of which 1.5 stick. Christians outnumbered Muslims in Africa in the 60s. One tenth of the African Christians (35m) belong to independent churches.

Catholicism is the ghost of the Spanish empire; Latin America has 424m baptised Catholics (and 50m Protestants), Africa 120m and expanding. Biggest Catholic populations are in Brazil (137m), Mexico (97m), Philippines (61m), USA (58m), Italy (55m). Tanzania has seen 419% increase in Catholics since 1961; all 29 dioceses have local bishops.

Anglican Communion has 70m members worldwide; Nigeria has 20m baptised Anglicans. By 2050, there will be c 150m Anglicans worldwide, of whom a small minority will be white Europeans. In Uganda 35-40% of the population is Anglican, in

20 dioceses and 7,000 parishes; the East African revival movement made these churches more visionary and healing than the mission church had been, and hence attractive to members of traditional animist faiths.

World Christian Encyclopaedia figs for worldwide denominations:

R C 1057m

Independent 386m

Protestant 342m (inc Pentecostal)

Orthodox 215m

Anglican 79m

Marginal 26m

Global total 2,105m

By 2000, Pentecostals were increasing by 19m each year. Term *evangelical* in Latin America refers to both Protestant and Pentecostal. Former mostly middle class, latter mostly poor. Over 3 years in the early 1990s Rio de Janeiro saw opening of 700 new Pentecostal churches; 240 Spiritist temples; 1 Catholic parish. Catholic church has had to adapt by allowing greater lay participation to make up for lack of priests – eg base communities, charismatic Catholic groups. Third world Christianity is becoming more Pentecostal both inside and outside the Catholic church.

In Africa it varies. Uganda has mostly traditional churches; in W Africa mission churches coexist with indigenous groups, in S Africa the independent and Pentecostal churches are strongest.

China - estimated from 20m to 50m Christians. The Chinese government says 20m people worship in government-registered churches alone. There are more Christians in China than in France or UK, including lots of defections from party officials.

Korea – gospel first taken in 1590s; 300,000 Christians in 1920, 10-12m today (25% of the population). The Full Gospel Church in Seoul has over ½ m members – it's in the Guinness Book of Records as the largest single congregation in the world.

But the Muslim world remains largely impervious.

Explanation of success? Urbanisation part of it – the churches replace the family networks that prevailed in the older villages. *The new churches are succeeding because they fulfil new social needs, and this is true in matters of gender as of race. No account of the new Southern movements can fail to recognize the pervasive role of women in these structures, if not as leaders then as the devoted core members... The new churches play a vital role in reshaping women's lives, in allowing them to find their voices. 75* More emphasis on male responsibility and chastity – a reformation of machismo.

Christianity in the early centuries appealed because of its radical sense of community; the individual could drop from a wide impersonal world into a miniature community, whose demands and relations were explicit – and this is true of modern Africa or Latin America too. To be a member of an active Christian church today might well bring more tangible benefits than being a citizen of Nigeria or Peru.

5. The rise of the new Christianity

In 1900 the North had 32% of world population; 18% in 2000; will be 10-12% by 2050. Global population now 6b; by 2050 will be 9b. Most growth will come in the South. The stagnation of Northern and esp European populations will be one of the most significant facts of the C21st. By 2050 the 10 biggest nations will be India, China, USA, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Brazil, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, DR Congo.

Hard to quantify Christians – eg UK has 25m Anglicans, of whom 1m go to church. For the purposes of the book, a Christian is someone who describes himself or herself as Christian, who believes that Jesus is not merely a prophet or an exalted moral teacher, but in some unique sense the Son of God. Religious trends do not develop as predictably as demographic factors.

Eg Nigeria is 40% Christian; but who can predict what will happen between the Muslim and Christian communities?

He suggests the largest Christian nations in 2050 will be USA, Brazil, Mexico, Philippines, Nigeria, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Russia, China and Germany. *Even in terms of formal adherence to Christianity, sub-Saharan Africa will already have displaced Europe as the chief Christian heartland within a mere quarter century.*⁹⁰

Uganda, now 40% Protestant, 35% Catholic, 10% Muslim. Population up from 5m in 1950 to 23m in 2000; may be 43m by 2050, by which time Uganda could have more Christians than the 4-5 largest European nations combined.

The most successful new denominations target their message at the have-nots, in new urban areas. By 2015, all the world's biggest cities will be in the South, except Tokyo. Today 40% of Africans live in cities; by 2050 it will be 66%.

In Europe, almost half of young UK adults do not believe that Jesus existed as a historical person, p94. 40% of population of UK identifies itself as Christian. Germany, France, Italy all have big discrepancies between people who say they are Christian and actual numbers practising.

Northern populations are older, and will require migration to sustain their economic life. Southern populations will grow and need to move northward due to poverty and environmental catastrophe; by 2015 nearly half the world population will live in countries that are 'water-stressed'. Europe already has 10-20m illegal immigrants from Africa and Asia. Mosques are spreading across Europe's urban landscape; but perhaps the new southern immigrants will bring a revitalized Christian presence. UK is already home to a network of African and Caribbean churches – half of churchgoers in London are black. Kingsway International Christian Centre, with Nigerian pastor Matthew Ashimolowo, has 5000 members. USA also becoming less white/European. In 2000, 34m were Hispanic, 12m Asian (out of 280m). Only 4-5% practise other religions (as in UK). It will remain one of the biggest Christian countries, but its Christianity will be increasingly of the Latin American type.

6. Coming to terms

Southern Christianity is more enthusiastic, more centrally concerned with the immediate workings of the supernatural, through prophecy, visions, ecstatic utterances, and healing – very different from what many Europeans and N Americans consider mainstream. This has sometimes led to suspicions that they are reviving pagan practices. In fact, however Southern types of Christianity have diverged from older orthodoxies, they have in almost all cases remained within recognizable Christian traditions; they may exercise a missionary appeal across racial and national boundaries. *Another new 'missionary century' may dawn, although next time, the missionaries would be travelling northward. 108.*

Because of the long W dominance, debates over faith and culture often focus on attitudes towards specifically European matters. European/N American ways of doing things are often taken as the benchmark. But the issue always arises in new Christian cultures – what is essential, what peripheral? Presumably if Christian history had run differently, other societies would have succeeded in spreading their distinctive cultural visions across the world, with equal confidence that they were the only ones fit for conveying Christian truth.

Europe – continuity with the northern barbarian religions was carefully assured by converting temples and renaming goddesses. Easter is the name of a pagan goddess. In Latin America the Virgin carries pagan associations. And as Christianity becomes increasingly southern, it will absorb the habits and thought worlds of the regions in which it is strongest. The NT used eastern Mediterranean language and metaphors – wheat and chaff, grafting vines etc. Translation – applying a vernacular principle. Eg white as snow becomes white as cotton, or in Africa Jesus is the true fig, not vine – fig tree represents ancestors, and is planted sometimes on tombs. Jesus thus becomes the voice of death and resurrection. In DR Congo, some use spears in the liturgical procession (imp visitors were to be greeted by spear-bearers); others use millet/maize and palm wine instead of bread and wine. In Brazil some use drumming and dancing in church to appeal to members of African descent.

Theology. Africans find power in the idea of Jesus as the great Ancestor (not high priest); or healer. Hispanic theology emphasizes liberation, suffering, social justice.

Mary often becomes the feminine face of God in Catholic churches.

Although these new theologies might disturb or repel some North Americans or Europeans, Northern views on religious matters should become less and less significant as the new century develops. 119

At what point does inculturation end, to be replaced by the submergence of Christianity into some other religion? Charges of syncretism have been raised against a number of 3rd World churches/theologians. Northerners fear that Southern churches are syncretistic or pagan, that they make for superstitious Christianity or post-Christianity, but often pre-Christian traditions include elements that fit well with the faith that missionaries are preaching – the idea of traditional religion as a preparatio evangelica. Missionaries have often found that many of their ideas resonate with native cultures.

If there is a single key area of faith and practice that divides Northern and Southern Christians, it is [the] matter of spiritual forces and their effects on the everyday human world. 123. When white missionaries refused to address witchcraft, they didn't realise they were going against the whole foundations of a society, the most basic means of understanding the world.

Healing is one of the strongest themes unifying the Southern churches – as it was from the beginning. Today rising African churches stand or fall by their success in healing. In Tanzania some of the most active healing work in recent years has occurred in the Lutheran church. Nowhere in the South is there competition from medicine – it's beyond the reach of the poorest. For most people, W medicine implies the assembly-line treatment of public hospitals, where any chance of receiving adequate treatment is outweighed by the danger of catching new infections. Healing allows Christianity to compete with traditional religion in Africa, animism and spiritism in Brazil, shamanism in Korea.

Bible. Third World churches take it very seriously indeed. Passages that seem mildly embarrassing for a Western audience read completely differently, and relevantly, in the new churches of Africa or Latin America.

Spiritual warfare. Peter Brown comments of the Roman world that the missionaries advanced principally by revealing the bankruptcy of men's invisible enemies, the demons, through exorcisms and miracles of healing. Ephesians 6 makes perfect sense in Africa. Moses Tey, Anglican archbishop of SE Asia, visited Vancouver and announced the totem poles of the tourist trade as idols possessed by evil spirits which required handling by prayer and exorcism – to general consternation... In many ways, the Christian texts/creeds make more sense in the independent churches than in the West. In Congo, transition from catechumen to baptised Christian has taken on many of the features of traditional initiation rites – Easter baptism ceremonies may involve an exchange of masks (shedding of pagan identities), exorcism (as in C2 Rome). It reminds us how Southern Christianity today stands to the wider society much as the church did in the Roman empire; churches rise and fall for similar reasons, face similar enemies. The Southern churches are living in something like a renewed apostolic age. *When we see such broadly similar churches growing in so many diverse regions, then the parallels cannot simply be explained in just cultural or racial terms.* Some of it lies in their newness. As they grow and mature, Southern churches will become more like the major churches – less prophetic, more formal and churchlike.

7. God and the world

What of the relationship between God and the world? *The greatest change is likely to involve our Enlightenment-derived assumption that religion should be segregated into a separate sphere of life, distinct from everyday reality.* 141. In USA in particular, the common assumption is that church/state, sacred/profane, should be kept apart. But in most periods this would have been incomprehensible, and in this sense the global South is more similar to medieval Europe. There is now a Christian politics. In the colonial period, the church was an arm of government; then it became identified with revolution. Liberation theology in Latin America; but Polish Pope had learnt to distrust any form of Marxism, and the Vatican silenced radical theologians. In Africa, most of the first generation of independent political leadership was Christian, often the product of mission schools, inc Kaunda, Nyerere, Senghor (Senegal), Nkrumah (Ghana). Desmond Tut. Bishops often led movements against dictatorship, and senior clergy are the focus of popular hopes in the way fragile nation states can't be. They often become political targets as a result.

In Asia, Philippine church has been active on social justice issues, in Korea it has stood up for democratic rights and nationalist causes.

But even avowedly Christian regimes don't necessarily share the W concern for democracy; and can demand submission whilst remaining corrupt – eg Chiluba in Zambia. Many independent churches in Africa are linked to tribal leaderships – Rwanda being the worst case of involvement of clergy in mass murder. Protestantism is a distinctive force in mass politics across S America; Protestant and Catholic will probably struggle for power in future. Politics in the south will increasingly be Christian politics, and international politics will increasingly revolve around the clash between Christianity and Islam. The economic divide will increase. A secular North with shrinking population will confront the poorer and more numerous South waving flags of Christianity and Islam – one result may be that a secularized North will be forced to deal with religious conflicts it doesn't understand; cp the US failure to deal with the new Islamic fundamentalism.

8. The next Crusade

Critical political frontiers around the world are decided by rival concepts of God. The most populous regions in the coming century are those where conflicts are already in progress. We mostly ignore them – eg Sudan. Countries with the highest birth rates are divided between mainly Christian (Uganda, Bolivia) and mainly Muslim (Yemen, Afghanistan). There are 240m Arabs today, and Islam is booming across Central Asia. Islam has a better oil future than Christianity – it may be that the secular North will find it hard to back Christians (sentimental) rather than Muslims (economic) where there is conflict.

Muslim nations: Pakistan, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, Yemen

Christian nations: USA, Brazil, Mexico, Russia

Evenly mixed: Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania

Unevenly mixed (more unstable): Indonesia, Egypt, Sudan; Philippines, DR Congo, Germany, Uganda.

Some European nations face disparities between fertile immigrant groups and static old-stock populations, and religious instability could result. Difficulties of evangelisation: Muslims who abandon their faith are apostates and liable to punishment by death under Islamic law.

Can Christianity and Islam co-exist? For much of the MA they did; Muslims have been tolerant. But outbreaks of fanaticism undermine trust and devastate minorities; whole Christian peoples have been obliterated since 1850 – Armenians, Lebanese, Syrians, Turks. In 1915 ancient Christian cultures were destroyed all over the Middle East. The Muslim world is in revival, calling often for Islamic law and religious states – perhaps feeling loss of cultural identity in the face of globalisation, or seeking a solution to Western wealth and materialism. Recent violence is from Muslims against Christians; not likely to change.

Sudan. Nigeria. Indonesia – 10% Christian. Violence increasing in all these places. But it is also occurring in places where previously it did not – Ivory Coast, Kenya, Yugoslavia, Egypt, Malaysia. Even in Europe. France with its Moroccans, Germany with its Turks.

India – Hinduism and Dalit Christianity.

Yugoslavia – US and W Europe sided with Muslims, resulting in increase in Muslim power and militancy in SE Europe, at expense of ancient Christian communities.

We can imagine a future in which Muslim and Christian alliances blunder into conflict, rather as the dual networks of European states reached the point of war in 1914, 188. Few subSaharan states have boundaries along ethnic or natural realities. Potential for conflict vast – just look at the way the Rwandan conflict drew in Congo, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Uganda. Religious fundamentalism is often associated with theocratic and authoritarian forms of government – which don't handle international crises well..

9. Coming home

Chas Williams, *Shadows of Ecstasy* – peoples of Africa invade a spiritually desolate Europe. But while traditional Christianity is weakening in large sections of the North, it is indeed begin reinforced and reinvigorated by Southern churches, by means of immigration and evangelization; and the result is conservative and charismatic. Maybe as once there was a Belgian Congo, there could be a Congolese Belgium.

Catholics in 2025 – most in Latin America, the Europe, then Africa, Asia, N America – 1,362m. 37% of baptisms in Africa are adult. Vatican has been saying things which infuriate W liberals (eg against pluralism) but which reflect the views of S Catholics. If it had to choose who to suit, it'd be the Southern Catholics not the N minority.

Churches in Africa / Asia are conservative on moral and sexual issues (though historically African cultures are no more fixedly heterosexual than N ones). They are happy to preach a traditional role for women.

Archbishop of SE Asia regards liberals as heretical over homosexuality. He and archbishop of Rwanda have ordained 'missionary bishops' to USA; orthodoxy moves from S to N.

In UK there are 1500 missionaries from 50 nations, many from Africa, dismayed at the spiritual desert they find.

10. Seeing Christianity again for the first time

Big imbalance in clergy – N has far more than S. North has 35% of Catholics and 68% of priests; Latin America 42 % of Catholics and 20% of priests. Northern world has 4x as many. The main steps taken to remedy priest shortages so far have been in importing S priests to the N...

If there is one thing we can reliably predict about the 21st century, it is that an increasing share of the world's people is going to identify with one of two religions, either Christianity or Islam, and the two have a long and disastrous record of conflict and mutual incomprehension. 214.

Considering Christianity as a global reality can make us see it in a new perspective; as if we are seeing it again for the 1st time. We are forced to see it not just for what it is, but also for what it was in its origins and will be in future. Eg, it is deeply associated with poverty. The GDP of subSaharan Africa is equivalent to that of the Netherlands.

Perhaps the most striking example is how the newer churches can read the Bible in a way that makes that Christianity look like a wholly different religion from the faith of prosperous advanced societies of Europe or N America, 217.

The future? No telling.