World Christianity 2
Disciples of All Nations
THE NEXT CHRISTENDOM
The Coming of Global Christianity
PHILIP JENKINS
A WORLD HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY

Edited by Adrian Hastings
All too often, statements about what “modern Christians accept” or what “Catholics today believe” refer only to what that ever-shrinking remnant of Western Christians and Catholics believe. Such assertions are outrageous today, and as time goes by they will become ever further removed from reality

- Jenkins, p. 3
The era of Western Christianity has passed within our lifetimes, and the day of Southern Christianity is dawning. The fact of change itself is undeniable; it has happened, and will continue to happen.

- Philip Jenkins, p. 3.
Number of Christians by Region
2000 versus 2025

Europe
- 2000: 555 millions
- 2025: 560 millions

Latin America
- 2000: 225 millions
- 2025: 640 millions

Africa
- 2000: 313 millions
- 2025: 633 millions

Asian
- 2000: 360 millions
- 2025: 460 millions

North America
- 2000: 225 millions
- 2025: 310 millions

Legend:
- Light blue: 2000
- Yellow: 2025
Percentage of Christians by Region

2025

- North America: 24%
- Asia: 18%
- Africa: 25%
- Latin America: 21%
- Europe: 12%
Growth of Christianity in Africa

Data from: Sanneh, p. 14 and Jenkins, p. 3
As Christianity moves South, we are witnessing according to Ghanaian scholar Kwame Bediako, the “renewal of a non-Western religion”
The Myth of Christianity as a “Western” Religion

- Popular Imagination and Media: Christianity is a Western phenomenon:
  - Adopted by the Roman Empire
  - Grew within a European heartland
  - Exported on an unwilling world beginning in the colonial period as a thin veneer to cover European ambitions for empire
The Myth of Christianity as a "Western" Religion

- Christianity was founded in the Near East
- For its first thousand years, it was stronger in Asia and North Africa than in Europe
- During its first centuries, Syria, Egypt, and Mesopotamia were the primary centers of Christianity
The Myth of Christianity as a “Western” Religion

- Only one of the five ancient Patriarchates of the Church was in the West
  - Constantinople
  - Antioch
  - Jerusalem
  - Alexandria
  - Rome
The Myth of Christianity as a “Western” Religion

Christian missionaries fanned out from its Near East heart into all the known continents: Europe, Africa, and Asia
Spread of Christianity
First Five Centuries
The Eastern Churches
The Eastern Churches

- Controversies over the divine and human in Christ divided the churches:
  - **Orthodoxy**: one person with two natures, divine and human
  - **Monophysites**: one person, one nature (combined divine and human). Accepted by most Egyptians
    - Declared heretical at Council Chalcedon 451
  - **Nestorianism**: two persons, divine and human
    - Declared heretical at Council of Ephesus 431
The Eastern Churches

- **Western Church** antagonist to many of the Eastern Churches because they retained heretical positions; they tended to retreat from the Western imagination
  - **Nestorian Church** (modern name: Church of the East) remained in Syria and Persia, sent missionaries to China and India
  - **Monophysite** position adopted by the Coptic (Egyptian) church, Ethiopian church, and the Armenian church
Two persons, human and divine ("Nestorianism")

emphasis on integrity & separateness of Jesus’ human & divine aspects (Antiochene School)

emphasis on Jesus’ humanity
Jesus only human (Ebionitism)
Jesus first among all created beings (Arianism)

emphasis on Jesus’ divinity
Jesus mostly divine (Apollinarius)
Jesus only divine (Docetism)

emphasis on unity of Jesus’ human & divine aspects (Alexandrian School)

One Human-Divine Nature (Monophysitism)
Armenia Church

- First state to establish Christianity as its official faith, about 300
- Fifth century: adopted the Monophysite position of one person, one nature
  - Became separated from the Western tradition
- Has survived up to this day
Christianity in Africa

Based on a graphic in Isichei, A History of Christianity in Africa, page 46
Ethiopian Church

- **Book of Acts:** Ethiopian Court Official one of first Gentile converts
- **3rd through 5th Century:** Syrian Missionaries arrived **Kingdom of Aksum** (Ethiopia); remembered as the “Nine Saints”
- **Head of church, the Abuna,** obtained from Coptic Church
- **Adopted the Monophysite theology**
Became increasingly isolated after the spread of Islam through the Middle East, Egypt and North Africa

Solomonic tradition became cornerstone of Christian Ethiopia sense of national identity. First recorded in *The Glory of Kings* in 1300’s

Queen of Sheba visited Solomon and bore his child, who became Menelik I of Aksum

Menelik I went to Jerusalem and took the Art of the Covenant back to his own people
Ethiopian Church

- Strongly Hebraic character:
  - Both Sunday and Sabbath observed
  - Every church includes a Holy of Holies, where a replica of the ark is kept. Only priests and kings can enter
  - Liturgy, with drumming, dancing, antiphonal singing and scriptural readings, amalgam Jewish & African elements
  - Jewish dietary laws strictly observed
- 180 fast days for laity; 250 for clergy
Ethiopian Church

- Strong monastic tradition: celibates and acetics
- Ethiopia remained independent:
  - location in the highlands
  - good relations with Islam because of protection it had given to Muhammad’s companions when they fled from persecution in Mecca
- Early 1500’s: Muslim jihad by Imam Ahmad (“a systematic campaign of cultural and national genocide”) nearly wiped out state
  - At this same time first emissaries from Europe arrived
  - Portuguese helped Kingdom defeat Ahmad in 1543
Approximate Area of Christian Ethiopia in 1400, Superimposed on modern map
Ethiopian Church

- 1970: church had 61,000 priests, 12,000 monks, 57,000 deacons, 31,000 choir leaders, and 827 monasteries
- Today: 25 millions members
Name a corruption of Aigyptos = native Egyptians

Language: descendant from the ancient Egyptian of the pyramid builders

Flight to Egypt important in the Coptic imagination: “Be glad and rejoice, O Egypt, and her sons and all her borders, for there hath come to Thee the Lord of Man…”
Coptic Church

- Believe an ancient tradition that St. Mark was the first apostle of Egypt and was martyred at Alexandria.
- **250**: Mass turning away from the old religion to Christianity began in Egypt (and North Africa); was nearly complete by 400.
- Martyrs of Thebais in upper Egypt time of Emperor Diocletian and later Maximin late 311, 312.
Coptic Church

- Eusebius: martyrs torn to pieces by sharp shards, or dismembered, or burned alive, so numerous that executioners exhausted and their axes worn out

- Coptic Church Calendar dated from the Era of the Martyrs – beginning at 284, when Diocletian became emperor
Coptic Church

- Invented Monasticism
- 639: Arab force invaded Byzantine Egypt
  - Aided by collaboration of several important figures: The Patriarch of Alexandria, Byzantine Governor (who surrendered fortresses) and a Coptic Duke Sanutius, who turned over the Egyptian fleet
  - “Ishmaelites” initially thought by some to be a Christian sect
Coptic Church

- Arabs initially valued Copts as taxpayers and civil servants
- Copts were majority until 900’s; Declined from waves of Arab immigration
Coptic Church

- By 900’s:
  - Had to live in special settlements (ghettos)
  - Wear distinctive uniforms
  - Evangelism prohibited
  - Men could only marry in community; Muslim men could marry Christian women; children would be Muslim
  - Taxation much heavier on Christians

- 1300’s periodic persecution after Mongol invasion
Coptic Church

- Start of Twentieth Century: 10 to 20 % of population of Egypt
- Today: official figure 5% (probably an underestimate), 10 million members
Nubia

- Nation converted to Christianity about 550
- Arabs did not conquer Nubia when they conquered Egypt: repelled by Nubia’s brilliant archers in two battles at Dongola
- Adopted Monophysite theology because of Coptic influence
- Remained a thriving nation for centuries
Nubia

- Egyptian Visitor in 969: “thirty villages with beautiful buildings, churches, monasteries and many palm trees, vines, gardens, fields and large pastures. . .”
- 1961: Faras Cathedral uncovered, with 169 paintings of dark-skinned Nubian kings, queens, bishops, biblical figures and saints
Nubia

- 1171: rise of the Abbuyids began to put increasing pressure on kingdom
- 1315: Muslim governor imposed by Egypt
- 1317: Dongola cathedral turned into a Mosque
- 1323: last Christian King defeated
- A splinter Christian Kingdom of Dotawo survived in lower Nubia until about 1494
India

- Nestorian Syrian missionaries founded native Christian communities in Southern India as early as the second century
- Communities claimed to follow St. Thomas: Mar Thoma
- Retained links with Nestorian patriarch of Babylon, who resided at Baghdad
- Indian State of Kerala today has 7 million “Thomas Christians”
China

- 600’s: Nestorian missionaries from Syria and Persia followed Silk Route and penetrated into Central Asia and China
- Chinese Imperial Court of the T’ang Dynasty welcomed them and their “luminous doctrine”
- 638: Church erected at Ch’ang-an, then the largest city in the world
T’ang Dynasty, 618-906

Map courtesy of the Friesian School, “Emperors of China” at www.friesian.com/sangoku.htm#china
Numbers
Distribution of Christians in Ancient and Medieval Times

From Jenkins, Table 2.1, page 24
Data from World Christian Encyclopedia
Two Watershed Events for Christianity in Asia and Africa

- Islamic Conquest of the Middle East and North Africa
- The Mongol Invasions and their defeat at Ayn Jalut
The Islamic Conquest of the Middle East and North Africa
Mongol Invasions and Their Defeat at Ayn Jalut
Mongol Invasions

- Early 1200’s: Mongol hordes began first wave of invasions into the Middle East
- Continued for 200 years
- Destroyed most centers of civilization in the Middle East
Ruin: Defeat of the Mongols at Ayn Jalut

- Christians initially saw Mongol invaders as potential liberators from the Muslims
- **1258**: Mongol king sacked Baghdad. His wife was a Christian
- Nestorians converted many members of the Mongol court
- Western crusaders allied with the Mongols
Ruin: Defeat of the Mongols at Ayn Jalut

- **1260**: Mongol army led by a Christian Turkish warlord invaded Palestine
- Mamluk Turks decisively defeated the invasion
- Mongols driven out
- Last of the Crusaders states perished
Ruin: Defeat of the Mongols at Ayn Jalut

- Christians persecuted for their alliance with the Mongols
- 1300’s: plaque swept over Asia. Muslims blamed Christians, who were subjected to repeated pogroms and mass forced conversions
China: Ming Dynasty and Reaction Against Christians

- **1368**: Ming Dynasty rose in China
- Nationalistic reaction against Christians because of their association with the Mongols
- **Early 1400’s**: Timur Tamerlane massacred Christian communities across Eurasia
- **Early 1500’s**: no Christian communities remained in China
Map courtesy of the Friesian School, “Emperors of China” at www.friesian.com/sangoku.htm#china
16th Century: A Dark Time for Christianity?

- Christianity declining in Asia since the Mongols invasion
- Christianity declining in Africa from increasing pressure from Muslims:
  - 1450’s: Nubia taken over by Muslims
  - Early 1500’s: Muslim jihad (“a systematic campaign of cultural and national genocide”) nearly wipes out Christian state of Ethiopia
16th Century: A Dark Time for Christianity?

- Muslim rule continued to expand under the Ottoman Turks until 1680’s, pressing on the frontiers of Germany.
- Muslim pirates regularly raided the coasts of northern and western Europe, taking tens of thousands of Christian slaves.
Map courtesy of the Friesian School, “The Ottoman Sultans and Caliphs, 1290-1924 AD” at www.friesian.com/turkia.htm
References