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THE STATUS OF WORLD CHRISTIANITY

(An outline overview for mission reflection)

Robert J. Oehrig

From time to time it is helpful for theologians, pastors and concerned Christians to stop a moment, take stock, and reflect on the unfinished task that is before us as World Christians. If we are faithful to scripture, and to the last command of our Lord Jesus Christ, we realize that our first task is to mission and the propagation of the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Many from our continent of Africa have answered the call to mission, and have engaged in both home and foreign mission activities. Still many others have only a vague understanding of our mission mandate and an even vaguer notion of the specific needs and challenges which our world presents to the Church.

Discussion has been increasing concerning appropriate structures for African Mission, and the role the Church in Africa can and must take in World Evangelisation. Before any attempt, however, can be made to look at African Mission structures and formulate strategies for outreach by African missionaries to the rest of the World, it is important for us to have a picture of our World as it is today. We do not take a very deep look before quickly realizing that the task of World Evangelisation is at once immense and daunting.

What follows, in summary fashion, is an overview of the status of world wide Christianity, with special focus on Africa and more specifically Kenya. Figures are given to help the mission student and concerned worker see more clearly the task and to hopefully provide a clearer glimpse of the mission needs region by region.

World population: 5 billion (1987) ---by the year 2000 it is estimated that it will increase to 6.2 billion. Today Asia finds over one half the world's population in Asia:

Asia	54.7%
The West	12.8%
Africa (South of Sahara)	8.7%
Eastern Europe	8.6%
Latin America	7.8%
Middle East	6.2%
Caribbean	0.7%
Pacific	0.5%

Africa (North and Sub-Sahara) contains slightly more than one half billion people, with nearly equal numbers of Christians and Muslims. (25% of the world's Muslims live in Africa).

Africa 520 million - 236 million Christian (45%)
 215 million Muslims (42%)
 5 million refugees (80% of World's Total)

Africa by year 2000 - 820 million people

Kenya's population:

20 million (75% agriculturalists, 10% pastoral, 15% urban)
 4% population growth rate
 40 million people by year 2000 (9 million will be urban)
 Nairobi (1987) - 1.6 million; 4 million by year 2000

Languages of the World: 5,455 (excluding dialects), with about half of the world's languages found in Africa.
 97% of world's population has some Scripture in its language.

Distinct ethno-linguistic groups: approx. 12,000 (3,000 without a viable church)

Cities: 3,000 with over 100,000 population
 305 with over 1 million (30 in Africa including Nairobi, Dar-es-Salaam, Kinshasa, Lagos)
 43% of world's population is urban (year 2000-50.5%)
 29% of Africa Urban (Kenya 15%)
 35% of East Asia Urban
 74% of Europe
 67% of Latin America
 81% of N. America

Clearly the vast majority of the world's future missionaries must focus on urban ministries.

Economy:

	average income per person
Developed countries	\$9,380
Developing countries	700
U.K.	9,050
Japan	10,100
USA	14,090
Nigeria	760
Kenya	340
Tanzania	240

Religion:

Non religious/atheist*	970,000,000	20%
Muslims**	900,000,000	18%
Hindus***	650,000,000	13%
Buddhist/Chinese/ Japanese folk religions	560,000,000	12%
Jews	15,000,000	-
Traditional religions	150,000,000	3%
Christians	1,570,000,000	32%
Others (Jains, Sikhs, Baha'i, etc)		1%

* Atheists are increasing, largely found in the West and 20 Marxist-Leninist countries

** Islam is the Majority religion of 37 countries of the World (including 16 African countries), 100 million in Pakistan, Indonesia, and India, 215 million in Africa.

*** Hinduism is the majority religion in 3 countries, sizeable minority in 11).

Africa - approximately 45% Christian, 42% Muslim

Kenya - approximately 73% Christian, though less than 40% in Church on given Sunday, less than 12% of Nairobi's population in Church.

- Traditional religion - 19-20%
- Muslims - 6-7%
- Others (Baha'i, Hindu, Jains etc): 1-2%
- 26 people groups with less than 20% Christians
Kenya's unreached - fall into one or more of following categories:

- 1) Muslim
- 2) nomadic/pastoral people
- 3) geographically isolated
- 4) culturally isolated (inc. Asians)

Evangelization World Wide:

Christians	32%	1.6 billion
Evangelized non-Christians	21%	1.0 billion
Unevangelized	47%	2.4 billion

Christianity (facts):

- Serious decline in Europe, thrilling growth in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.
- Overall percentage of Christians has changed little in the past century (though slight decline 34% to 32% of total population).
- In North America the number of Christians in the population has remained fairly steady for the past two decades, but Christians as a percentage of the population has declined.
- Of 218 nations, only 20 have a resident Christian population of less than 1%. Christianity has become a world religion in this century.

Christianity by Continent:

Continent	Number	% of all Christian
Africa	240 million	15.3
East Asia	22 million	1.4
Europe	420 million	27.2
L. America	392 million	25.3
N. America	227 million	14.7
South Asia	125 million	8.1
Oceanic	21 million	1.4
USSR	102 million	6.6
World Total	1,549 million	100.0

Christianity (traditions as percentage of world population):

Roman Catholics	17.5%	(majority of population in 58 states)
Orthodox	3.2%	
Marginals	1.2%	(i.e. Mormons, Jehovah Witness)
Protestants	10.4%	
Totals	32.3%	

Christianity (traditions as percentage of Africa's population):

Roman Catholics	17.2%
Orthodox	4.2
Marginals	1.7
Protestants	16.3
Indigenous	6.3
Totals	45.7%

East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology

Kenyan Christianity: Catholics 26%
 Protestants 25%
 Indigenous 20%
 Orthodox 2%
 Total 73%
 (25,000 + congregations, 300+ denominations)

"Evangelical" Christianity:

Approximately 250 million (or 5% of world's population)

Region	Number of Evangelicals	% of Region's Population
The West	72 million	12%
Asia	72 million	3%
Africa	48 million	11%
Latin America	35 million	9%
Eastern Europe	12 million	3%
Pacific	5 million	18%
Caribbean	3 million	8%
Middle East	1 million	>1%
World-wide	248 million	5%

Share of "Evangelicals" worldwide:

	1800	1900	1960	1970	1980	1985
The West and Eastern Europe	98%	91%	68%	64%	47%	34%
The "Third World"	2%	9%	32%	36%	53%	66%

Growth of Evangelical believers (1975-1985):

The West and Eastern Europe - 1.3% annually
 The Third World - 6.7% annually

Missions:

Approx. 81,000 missionaries (Protestant) - home and
foreign (approx. 20,000 are from Third-World)
52,000 who have moved from their home countries

Ratio of missionaries to population

Asia	1:206,000
Africa	1: 33,100
Latin America	1: 33,500
The West	1: 84,500
Pacific	1: 6,540
Caribbean	1: 16,400
Middle East	1:190,200
Eastern Europe	1:950,000

Sources and helpful materials on World Christianity/Missions:

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