

# The Most Hopeful Picture You Have Ever Seen!

The Bible does not lead us to assume that all poverty, debauchery, corruption will be conquered before Jesus returns.

The Bible does tell us that all peoples will be represented in the final, triumphant company of believers, and that "God will wipe every tear from their eyes...no more death or mourning or crying or pain."

That wonderful hymn, "America, The Beautiful" foresaw "alabaster cities gleam, undimmed by human tears." (The writer of the hymn had just passed through the Chicago exposition where all the buildings were gleaming white...)

But this is a little different from the Biblical view which simply makes clear that the expanding domain of God's Kingdom will "break into" (Gen 28:14) every people group and that some from every group will ultimately be represented in that final moment of history (note that in the best Greek text Rev 21:3 says "He will live with them...and they will be His peoples...")

## But In Any Case!

*It does not matter what your interpretation of the Bible happens to be as far as the reality of the statistics on this page!*

The dramatic decrease in the number of people who do not claim to be Christians in comparison to the number of earnest believers, the dramatic increase in the number of congregations of the faithful in proportion to the number of nations/peoples yet to be reached...these numbers are hard to assail.

Once you recognize the first four columns of pretty irrefutable figures in the table on the next page, the following, shaded columns are straightforward arithmetic!

The decline of the burden and the increase of the vital resources of the Christian movement worldwide constitute the most hopeful picture you could possibly imagine. We are literally running out of people to be evangelized! That is a general statement.

## What about the Chinese?

China today is riddled with Christians. Peasants in every part of China are embracing the Christian faith. Chinese intellectuals in Singapore are embracing the Christian faith. I heard yesterday that the government of China is asking minorities what their religion was before Communism

tried to stamp it out. The people in one area said, "We are Christians," and so the government is helping them build a Bible college to encourage their people.

## What about the Tribals?

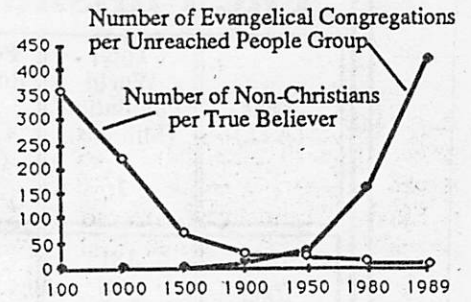
This the largest, most difficult single category of missions today, simply due to the extreme complexity of hundreds of smaller languages and dialects. But it is one of the most responsive spheres of labor, too. And, the world's largest, most sophisticated mission agency, Wycliffe Bible Translators, is focusing on this specific challenge—nowadays many other missions are sending out tribal workers through Wycliffe.

## What about the Hindus?

The horrifying atrocities (the burning of young brides, the systematic abortion of baby girls...) live in uneasy alliance with certain high standards of purity which Christianity at its best also stresses. We understand from people within the situation that perhaps 25% of all Hindus would accept Christ if this could happen without the breakup of their families.

## What about the Muslims?

This enormous, long-considered "impenetrable" sphere of world population is electrifyingly more open than ever before. More Muslims have become Chris-



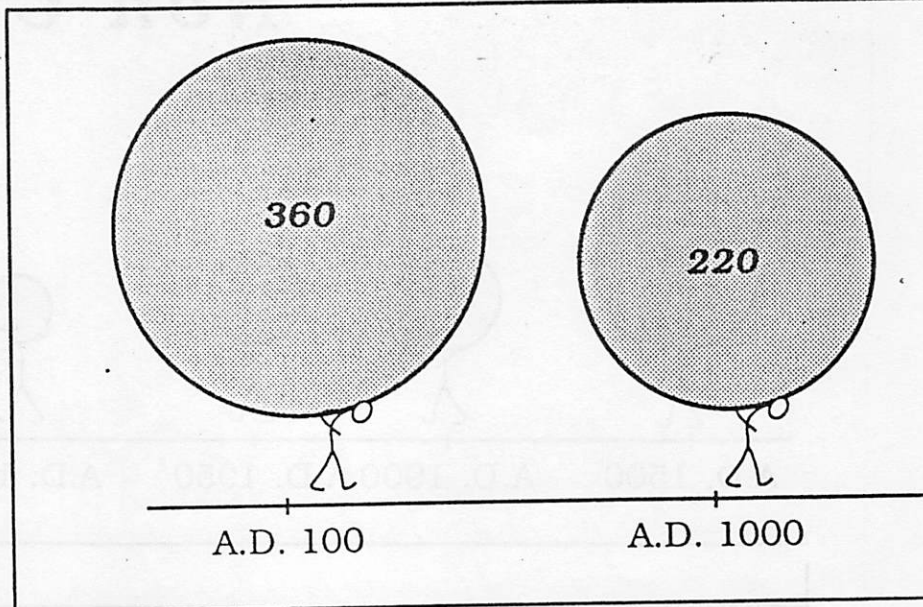
tians in Indonesia, Bangladesh, Iran, and East Africa in the last ten years than in the last ten centuries.

Actually, many Muslims were Christians before Islam offered them what appeared to be a superior version of Christianity. (And for many of them Islam actually was superior in some ways to the very inferior version of Christianity they had!)

It is entirely possible that literally millions could turn to a new understanding of the Jesus they already extol. Over 10,000 Muslims in Kenya have recently embraced the Bible as their sacred book. God may not expect us to try to convert these humble seekers into recognized versions of Western Christianity. Our duty is to deliver to them the Word of God, and let the Holy Spirit lead them into all truth.

## What about the Japanese?

At no time in Japan's long history has its people faced so unprecedented a crisis of national identity. The Christian faith is the only religion that has grown in the very teeth of secular challenge and opposition. Today 35% of the Japanese, according to a Japanese government census,



# The Finishable Task!

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Year (A.D.)	Total World Population (Millions) 1	People who do not claim to be Christians (Millions) 2	People who call themselves Christians (Millions) 3	Great Commission Christians* (out of Col # 3) (Millions) 4	Non-Christians per Believer (Column #2 Divided by Column #4) 5	Unreached People Groups 6	Congregations per Unreached People Group (Col #6 + Col #4/100) 7
100	181	180	1	0.5	360:1	60,000	1:12
1000	270	220	50	1	220:1	50,000	1:5
1500	425	344	81	5	69:1	44,000	1:1
1900	1,620	1,062	558	40	27:1	40,000	10:1
1950	2,504	1,650	854	80	21:1	24,000	33:1
1980	4,458	3,020	1,433	275	11:1	17,000	162:1
1989	5,160	3,438	1,722	500	7:1	12,000	416:1
2000	6,260	4,130	2,130	1000	4:1	0?	?

\*"Great Commission Christians" is a new phrase being employed by the LCWE Statistics Task Force to refer to those believers who take seriously the Great Commission.

Col 1-4: *World Christian Encyclopedia*, David Barrett;  
Col 5-7: R.D. Winter, 3/89  
(Consultants: LCWE Statistics Task Force)

would choose Christianity if they were to accept a religion.

### Who Else Is There?

We are not even asked to win every last soul on earth. Ours is not a task of "conquering" but of lovingly, faithfully "confronting." The Bible, which defends no particular modern civilization, is the phenomenal tool in our hands, for us and for all humankind!

### Whence these amazing numbers?

The first three columns are simply drawn from the published figures in the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, plus recent updates by the author, David Barrett. Barrett and I have talked over each of the estimates in column four, involving this new phrase, Great Commission Christians. These are the earnest believers among the vast multitude of people who consider themselves Christians.

In all of this we are happy to be working in cooperation with the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization's new Statistics Task Force, headed by David Barrett.

We are being asked by this group to set aside our number of 16,000 unreached peoples for a somewhat more optimistic estimate of 12,000, which, it is hoped, will create a simpler, clearer picture for the public. For more on this, see page 3.

## Non-Christians per Believer

