

2025 NORTH ALABAMA ANNUAL CONFERENCE



June 12 - 14, 2025 • Trussville, AL • Clearbranch Methodist Church



GLOBAL
METHODIST CHURCH

The Truth of Methodism

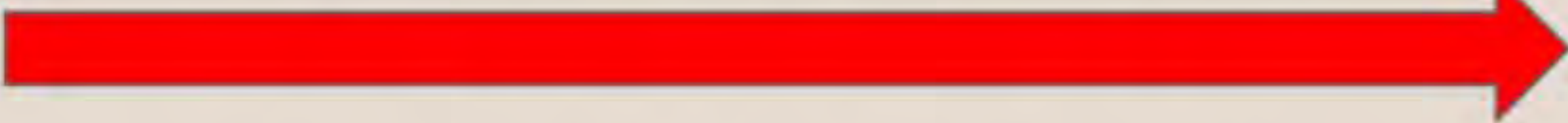


Session #1: From whence hath we come?

The soil out of which the truth of Methodism arises



The Great “Catholic” Tradition



Apostles’ Creed – early 2nd
Nicene Creed – 325, 381 (589)
Chalcedonian Formula – 451 A..D.
Athanasian Confession- 7th C.
Semper ubique ab omnibus

2 Timothy 1:13, 14 – hold fast
I Cor. 15:3 – remember “first importance”
received... pass on... *parelabon / paredoka.*

I Cor. 4:1,2 – stewards of mysteries...
required to be faithful

Regula fidei – rule of faith

Retrieval as Renewal....

Wesleyan “Truth” must have a foundation

**Polycarp.... ““Eighty-six years I have served him,
and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme
my King who saved me?” 155 AD**

Discovering a new kind of ecumenism....

- **We are Trinitarian Christians who, by the grace of God, belong to the whole company of the redeemed through the ages, those who are very members incorporate in the mystical body of Christ.**
- **For too long, ecumenism has been left to left-leaning Catholics and mainline Protestants. We must discover the true ecumenism with historic Christians and with the global church.... Lausanne, WEA, ICETE etc...**

Three Streams out of the 16th C. Reformation



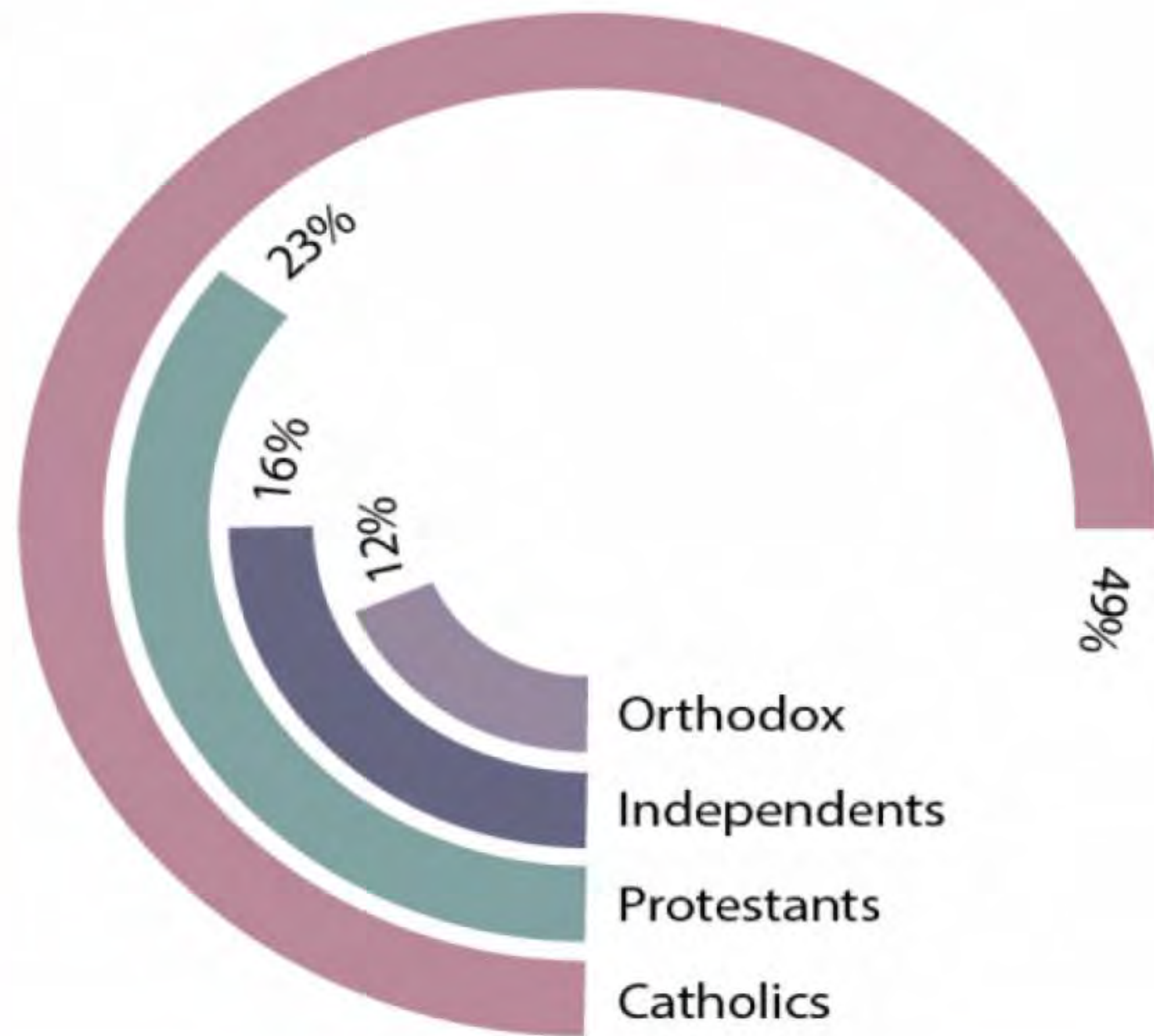
The objection of the Reformers to Medieval Catholicism was not that it had become too old and needed to be made “more relevant”, but that it was too new and mistakenly innovative.” It had invented novelties in relation to the apostolic testimony. This is the basis of the GMC dissent against the UMC. It was not a fight about human sexuality, it was a struggle over Christian identity.— 7

50,000 denominations!

Denominations globally over time

1800	500
1900	1,956
1970	13,087
2010	31,046
2015	40,501
2020	44,715
2025	50,202

Pace: Over 1,000 new denominations
Per year!!





Christian movements begin because some aspect of the “grand tradition” is (or is perceived to be) missing or under-emphasized

Reformation Streams....

- **Augustinian / Lutheran / Calvinist Stream**
- **Dispensationalist Stream**
- **Wesleyan / Pentecostal Stream**

Reformation Streams....

- **Augustinian / Lutheran / Calvinist Stream**

Focus on Soteriology

- **Dispensationalist Stream**

Focus on Eschatology

- **Wesleyan / Pentecostal Stream**

**Focus on Christian experience/
holiness / sanctification**

Every renewal movement tends to point out an area in the life, thought, or practice of the church which they believed needed greater focus, renewal or re-discovery - principle of *semper ecclesia reformanda*

God - anthropology - Christology - soteriology - ecclesiology - eschatology

Nature Of God	Sin, Fall	Person & Work of Christ	Justification Sanctification	Church	Future New Creation
--------------------------	------------------	--	---	---------------	------------------------------------

Augustinian / Lutheran / Calvinist Stream

Dispensationalist Stream

God - anthropology - Christology - soteriology - ecclesiology - eschatology

Nature Of God **Sin, Fall** **Person & Work of Christ** **Justification** **Church** **Future**
Sanctification **New Creation**

Wesleyan / Pentecostal Stream

But every renewal has blind spots or weaknesses...

- **Reformed Stream tends to be individualistic and deterministic.**

 - Doctrine of Church (no sola ecclesia)

 - Doctrine of Salvation (reduced to justification)

- **Dispensation Stream tends to promote ahistorical readings of Scripture**

 - Loss of continuity between Israel and Church /OT and NT

 - Loss of catholicity by confusing creeds with eschatological positions
(especially pre-millennialism and rapture)

- **Wesleyan Stream tends to make experience a norm**

 - Quadrilateral became an equilateral – damaging norm of Scripture

 - Piety can slip into legalism

 - Focus on sanctification “house” can make the justification “doorway”
unclear

All streams tend to impose “system grids” over scripture which influences interpretation and allows us to ignore or explain away texts which don't fit neatly into our systems.



Commentaries

- **The English Reformation and the later Evangelical Revival which produced the Wesleyan stream never produced a major commentary on the Book of Romans. Thus, Reformed interpretations of Paul's Epistle to the Romans dominated Christian training all the way to the 20th century**

Wesleyan scholarship behind other major theological streams

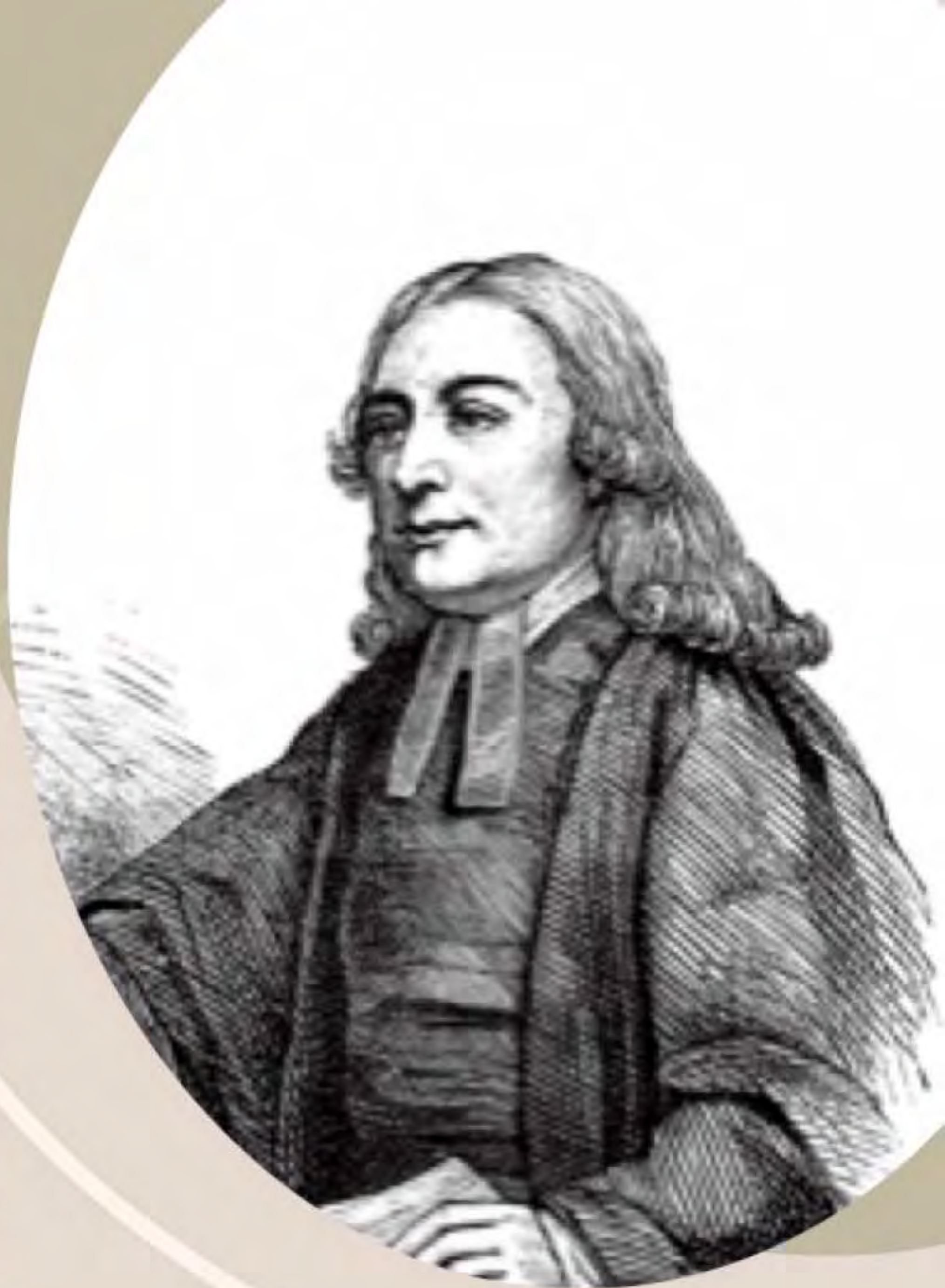
- **A comprehensive critical edition of John Wesley's work – sermons, theological treatises, letters and journals did not come out until the 20th century!! (Jackson edition 14 volumes)**
- **Bicentennial edition (critical edition still in progress... currently 26 volumes of 35).**

From the Great Evangelical Awakening to the The Great Evangelical Earthquake



Session #2

Wesleyan Distinctives



7 Distinctives of Wesleyan theology

- **1. Wesley's way of "doing" theology: (conjunctive)**
- **2. Wesley's way of "doing" theology: (practical)**
- **3. Wesley's view of Scripture**
- **4. Wesley's view of grace**
- **5. Wesley's view of holiness / sanctification**
- **6. Wesley's view of the community (church / bands)**
- **7. Wesley's view of the world / mission**

Wesleyan Distinctive #1

Wesley was a “**conjunctive theologian**” (Outler)

Wesley moved theology to a “**both-and**” rather than an “**either-or**” view of the historic tensions found in the catholic tradition.

Faith alone / grace

Law

Personal salvation

Instantaneous

Divine Intervention

Monergism

Sovereignty

Holy Living /works

Gospel

Societal justice

Process

Human response

Synergism

Free Will

Albert Outler

Wesley glimpsed the underlying unity of Christian truth in both the Catholic and Protestant traditions and...turned this recognition to the services of a great popular religious reform and renewal. In the name of a Christianity both Biblical and patristic, he managed to transcend the stark doctrinal disjunctions which had spilled so much ink and blood since Augsburg (Reformation) and Trent (counter-Reformation). In their stead, he proceeded to develop a theological fusion of faith and good works, Scripture and tradition, revelation and reason, God's sovereignty and human freedom, universal redemption and conditional election. Christian liberty and an ordered polity, the assurance of pardon and the risks of 'falling from grace,' original sin and Christian perfection. In each of these conjunctions, as he insisted almost tediously, the initiative is with God, the response with man.

Distinctive #2: Wesley is a “practical” theologian

Wesleyan theology is oriented toward the church and mission and less towards creating a neat philosophical system which focuses on speculative issues.

This is actually a feature of Wesley’s conjunctive theology, bringing together serious theological reflection with the practice of ministry in the life of the church.

“missions at sunrise, missiology at sunset”

“Practical theology at sunrise, theological systems at sunset”

Great Evangelical Revival / Great Awakening

1730’s - 1740’s

Distinctive #3: Wesley's View of Scripture

**Sola Scriptura - Not "Scripture alone" but "Scripture as primary"
Quadrilateral, not equilateral**

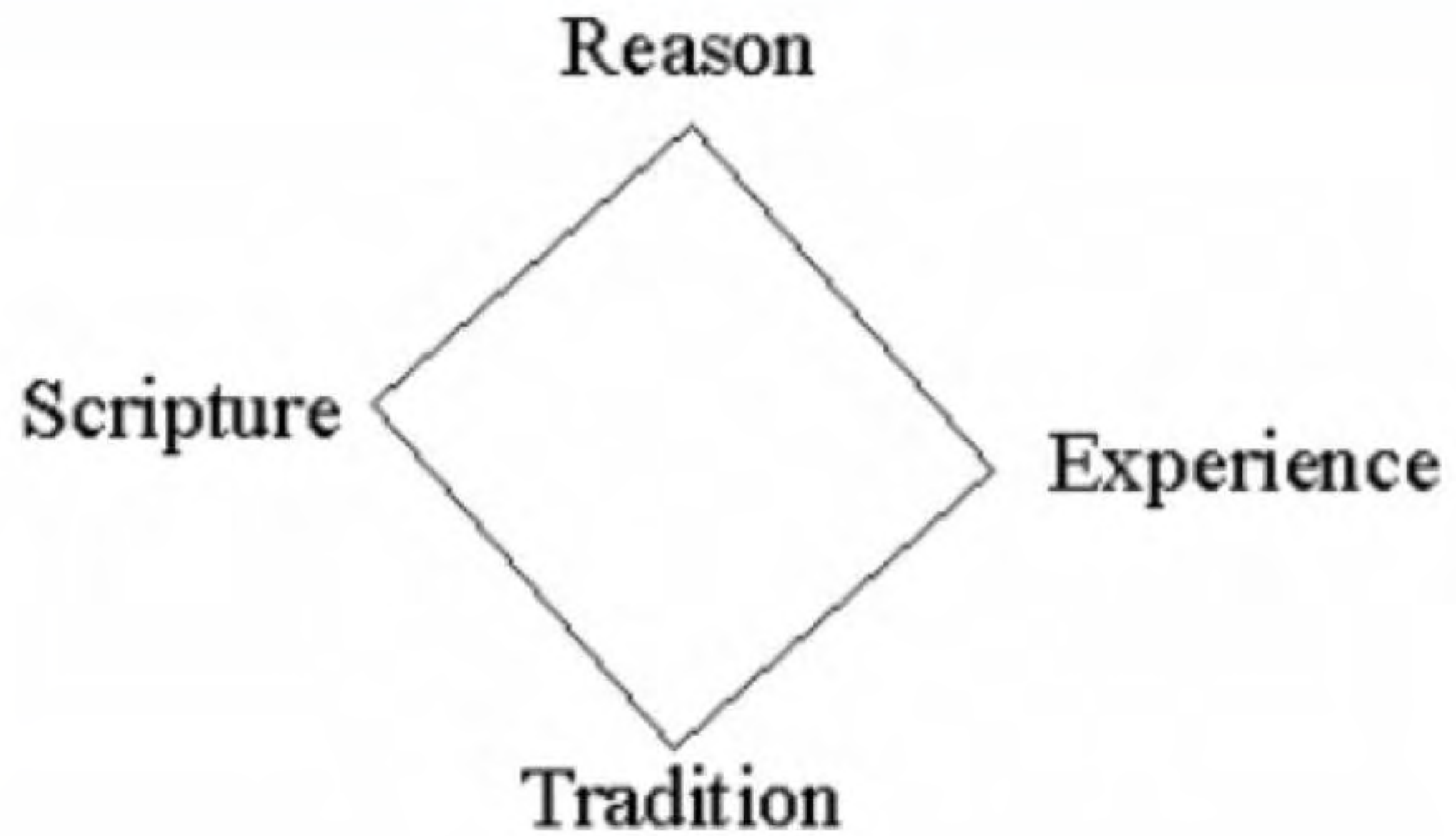
scripture

tradition

reason

experience

**Anglican Trilateral "converges" with Moravian
emphasis on experience.**

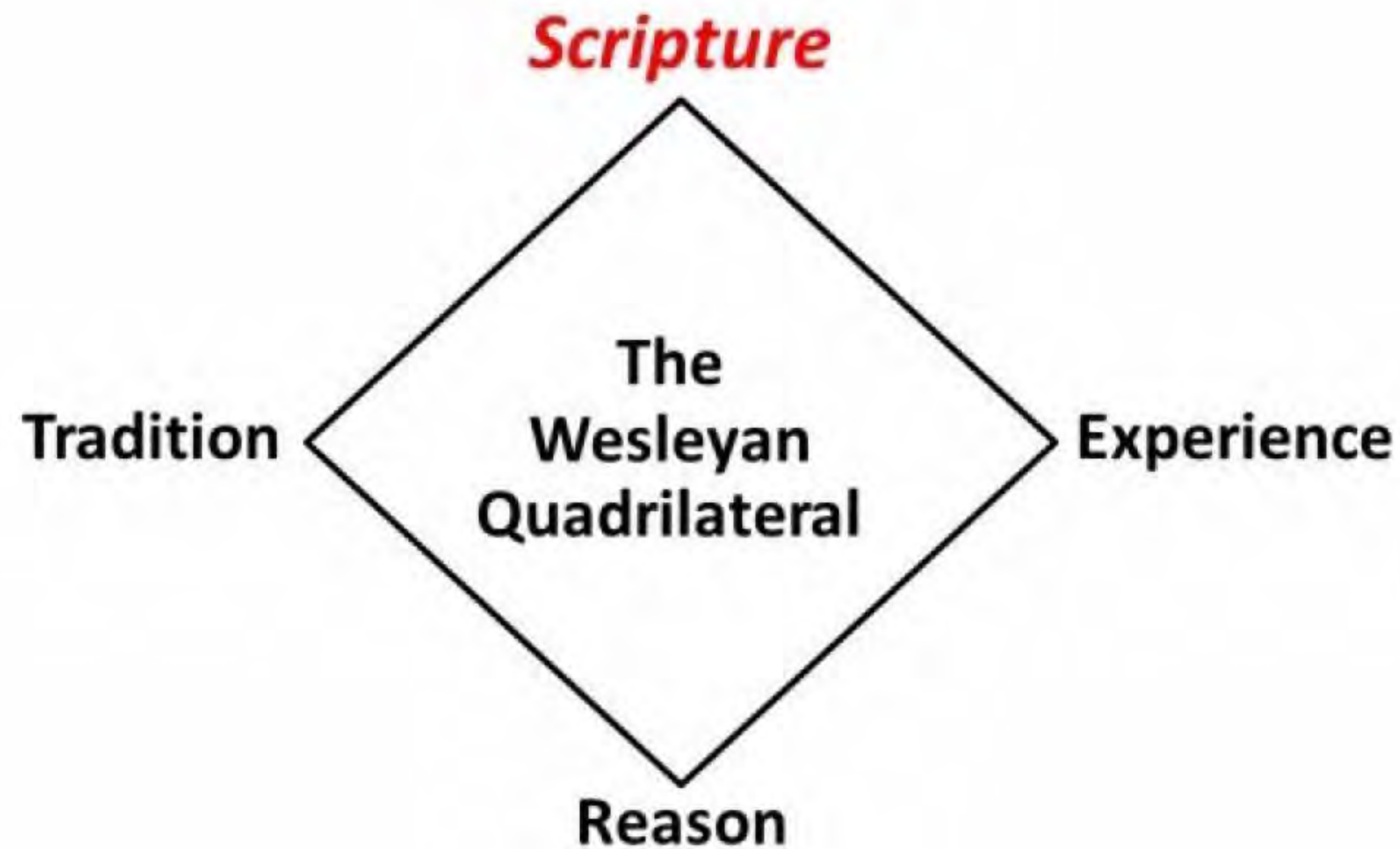


Wesleyan Quadrilateral

Not an Equilateral



The “Wesleyan Quadrilateral”*



Theology



Experience

Reason

Tradition

Scripture



Distinctive #4

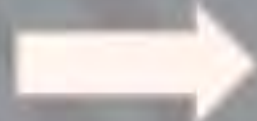
Wesley's expanded view of grace

**Christocentric justification vs.
Trinitarian grace**

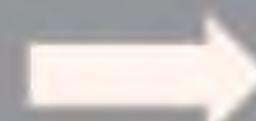
**Reformer's view of justification
"converges" with Eastern Orthodox
views of *theosis* / living icons**

Wesleyan View of Grace

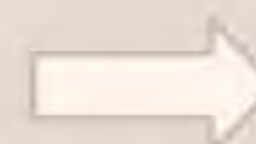
**Prevenient
Grace**



**Justifying
Grace**



**Sanctifying
Grace**



**Glorifying /
Perfecting
Grace**



➤ **Wesleyan view of grace**

16th century Reformation focused on and restored this essential doctrine... Wesley expanded doctrine of grace, and re-asserted that "salvation" is more than "justification" because it is fully trinitarian!



Distinctive #5: View of Holiness

- **What is meant by “entire sanctification”?**
- **Alien vs. native**
- **Imputed vs. actualized**
- **Declared vs. embodied**

The Second Half of the Gospel

2011 Barna Study with theological categories

Percentage of Americans	Religious Stage		
1%	Unaware of Sin	Nominal Justifying Grace	89% either on the porch or just inside God's house
16%	Indifferent to Sin		
39%	Worried about Sin		
9%	Forgiven from Sin		
24%	Forgiven and Active in the Church		
6%	Holy Discontent	Sanctifying Grace	11% actively walking deeper into God's house of grace.
3%	Broken by God		
1%	Surrender and Submission		
0.5%	Profound Love for God		
0.5%	Profound Love for People		



THE RADICAL WESLEY

THE PATTERNS AND PRACTICES
OF A MOVEMENT MAKER
HOWARD A. SNYDER

THE JOHN WESLEY COLLECTION

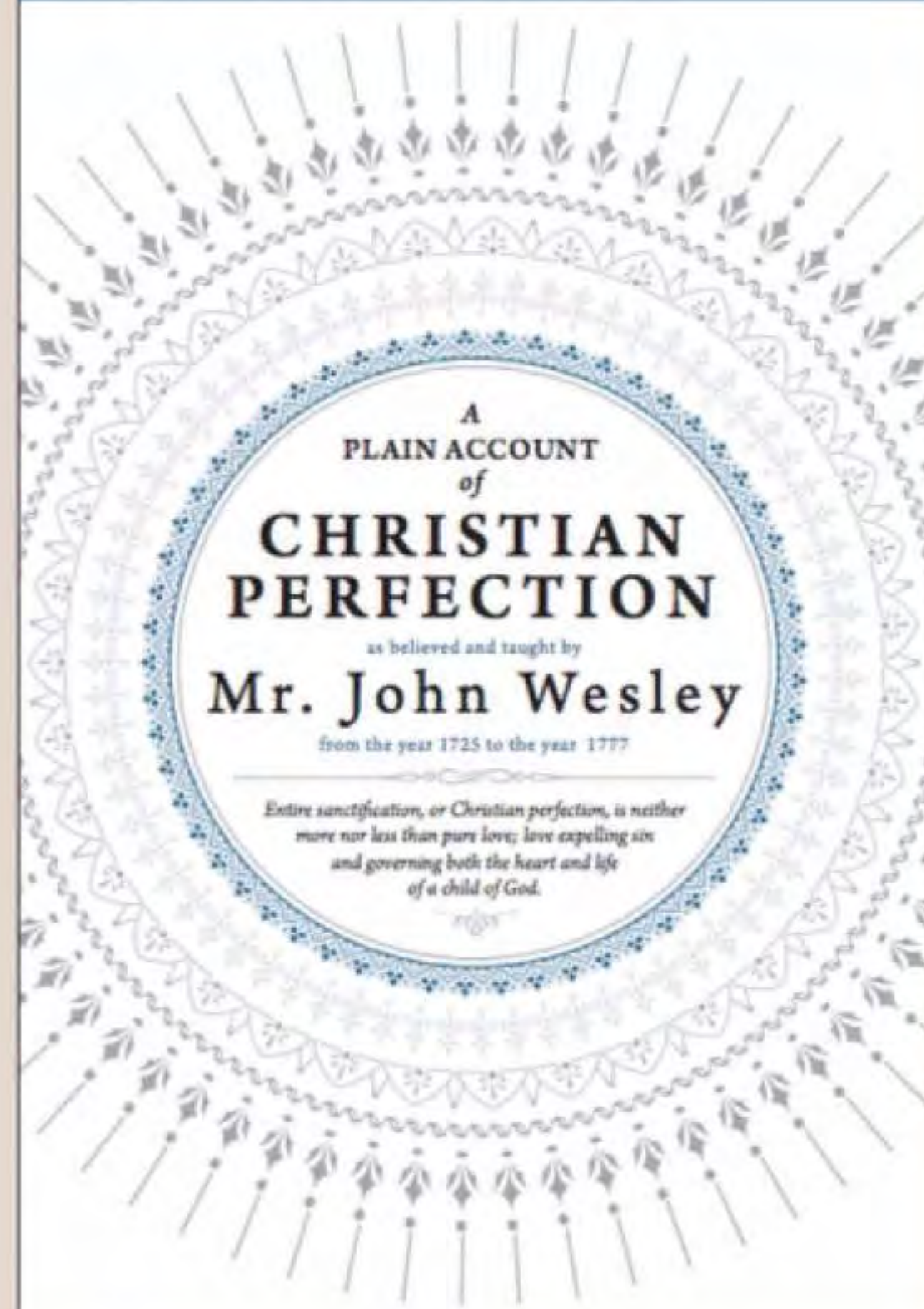


“Behold,
I show you the thing
which your soul longs for!”

THIRTEEN DISCOURSES ON THE
**SERMON ON
THE MOUNT**
JOHN WESLEY

SEEDBED PUBLISHING

THE JOHN WESLEY COLLECTION



A
PLAIN ACCOUNT
of
**CHRISTIAN
PERFECTION**
as believed and taught by
Mr. John Wesley

from the year 1725 to the year 1777

*Entire sanctification, or Christian perfection, is neither
more nor less than pure love; love expelling sin
and governing both the heart and life
of a child of God.*

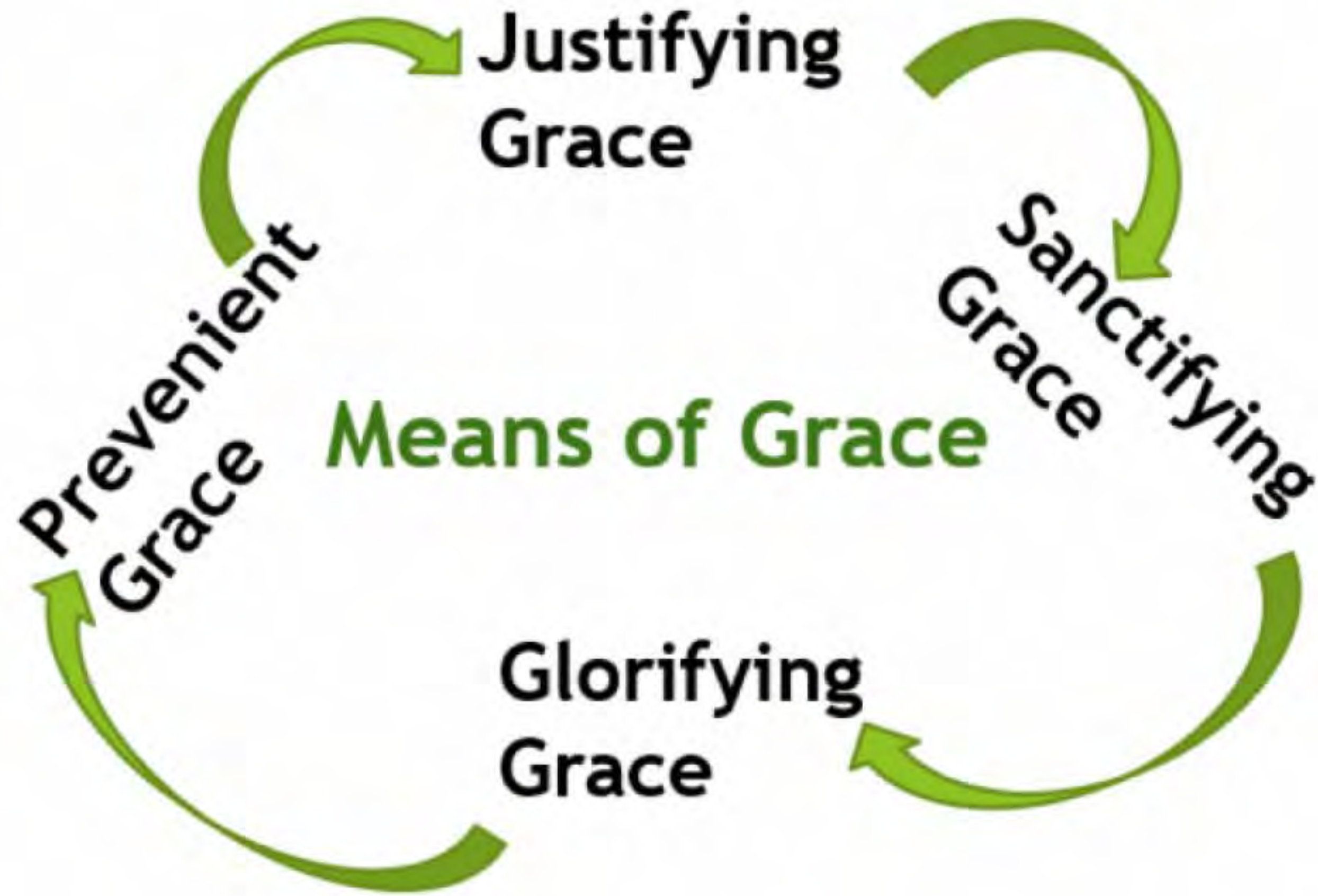
SEEDBED PUBLISHING



The Fruit of Holiness

➤ **“If you were to eradicate every sin in your life, you would only be halfway there!”**

Means of Grace



Coinherence – Union with Christ

Prayer

Scripture
public/private

Sacraments

Works of Piety vs.
Works of Mercy

Distinctive #6 Wesleyan View of the Community

no *sola ecclesia* in
Reformation





THE BAND MEETING

Rediscovering Relational Discipleship
in Transformational Community

KEVIN M. WATSON
AND
SCOTT T. KISKER

INCLUDES A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE



THE CLASS MEETING

Reclaiming a Forgotten
(and Essential)
Small Group Experience

KEVIN M. WATSON

INCLUDES AN EIGHT-WEEK CLASS MEETING CURRICULUM

Wesleyan View of the Community

**You can be justified on a
deserted island, but you
cannot be sanctified
there!**

**Discipleship (band / class
meetings)**

Community Catechesis!





**John Wesley called Thomas Coke his “flea”
1784 “Plan of the Society for the Establishment
of Missions among the Heathens.”**

**Jamaica, Americas, France, Gibraltar,
Canada, Sierra Leone, Scotland**

Distinctive #7: Wesleyan view of the world: Mobile Holiness

- “The world is my parish!”
- The church as the community of the “new Creation!”
- We are agents of God’s grace to a lost and hurting world!

“You are my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Juda and Samaria and to the ends of the earth!”

Session #3 Wesleyan Vision for the World

- **North America and Europe averaging 12,000 losses per day**
- **Sub-Saharan Africa averaging 10,000 gains per day....**

Table 1. Global Population, Global Cities, and Urban Mission, 1900–2050.

	1900	1970	2000	2020	% p.a.*	mid-2025	2050
Global Population							
Total population	1,619,625,000	3,695,390,000	6,148,899,000	7,840,953,000	0.88	8,191,988,000	9,709,492,000
Adult population (over 15)	1,073,646,000	2,302,129,000	4,290,579,000	5,827,214,000	1.46	6,264,023,000	7,699,095,000
Adults, % literate	27.6	63.8	76.7	84.1	0.02	84.2	88.0
Urban population (%)	14.4	36.5	46.7	56.1	1.06	59.1	68.0
Global urban population	232,695,000	1,347,106,000	2,869,247,000	4,397,965,000	1.95	4,843,655,000	6,604,545,000
Cities over 1 million	20	145	371	579	2.43	653	950
Under 50% Christian	5	65	226	345	2.80	396	500

Table 2. Global Religion, 1900–2050.

	1900	1970	2000	2020	% p.a.*	mid-2025	2050
Global Religion							
Religious diversity ¹	2.7	4.3	4.5	4.4	-0.04	4.4	4.4
Religionists	1,616,370,000	2,986,913,000	5,365,962,000	6,942,770,000	0.97	7,285,421,000	8,842,489,000
Christians	558,346,000	1,216,131,000	1,987,905,000	2,519,505,000	0.98	2,645,317,000	3,312,204,000
Muslims	200,301,000	574,379,000	1,299,602,000	1,897,880,000	1.67	2,061,718,000	2,860,760,000
Hindus	202,976,000	467,434,000	843,615,000	1,090,611,000	0.70	1,129,155,000	1,245,725,000
Buddhists	126,946,000	233,383,000	448,423,000	531,050,000	0.27	538,173,000	533,434,000
Chinese folk-religionists	379,974,000	238,188,000	420,817,000	453,250,000	-0.22	448,283,000	392,978,000
Ethnoreligionists	117,313,000	171,476,000	225,753,000	288,156,000	0.46	294,801,000	306,733,000
New Religionists	5,986,000	39,557,000	63,579,000	67,463,000	0.07	67,690,000	65,329,000
Sikhs	2,962,000	10,668,000	21,605,000	29,254,000	1.45	31,433,000	41,842,000
Jews	11,725,000	13,959,000	12,948,000	14,800,000	0.74	15,357,000	17,942,000
Nonreligionists	3,255,000	708,478,000	782,937,000	898,183,000	0.19	906,567,000	867,003,000
Agnostics	3,028,000	543,321,000	645,052,000	751,227,000	0.26	761,092,000	733,956,000
Atheists	226,000	165,156,000	137,885,000	146,957,000	-0.20	145,475,000	133,047,000

World pop. 8 billion (130-140M born/year
61-68M die/year (net 62M-79M/year)

1970 – 34.47%
70.5 × 70 = 4.935 billion
div. By 34.4 = 1.7 bil.
1970 – 1.2 billion

2020 – 32.1%
5 years – 352,500,000
Div by 32.1%, = 113 mil
125 million actual

**Digging
Deeper into
the
numbers....**

Christianity from 1900 to 2025 has gone through a dramatic changes, but the overall percentage of world population has remained stable.

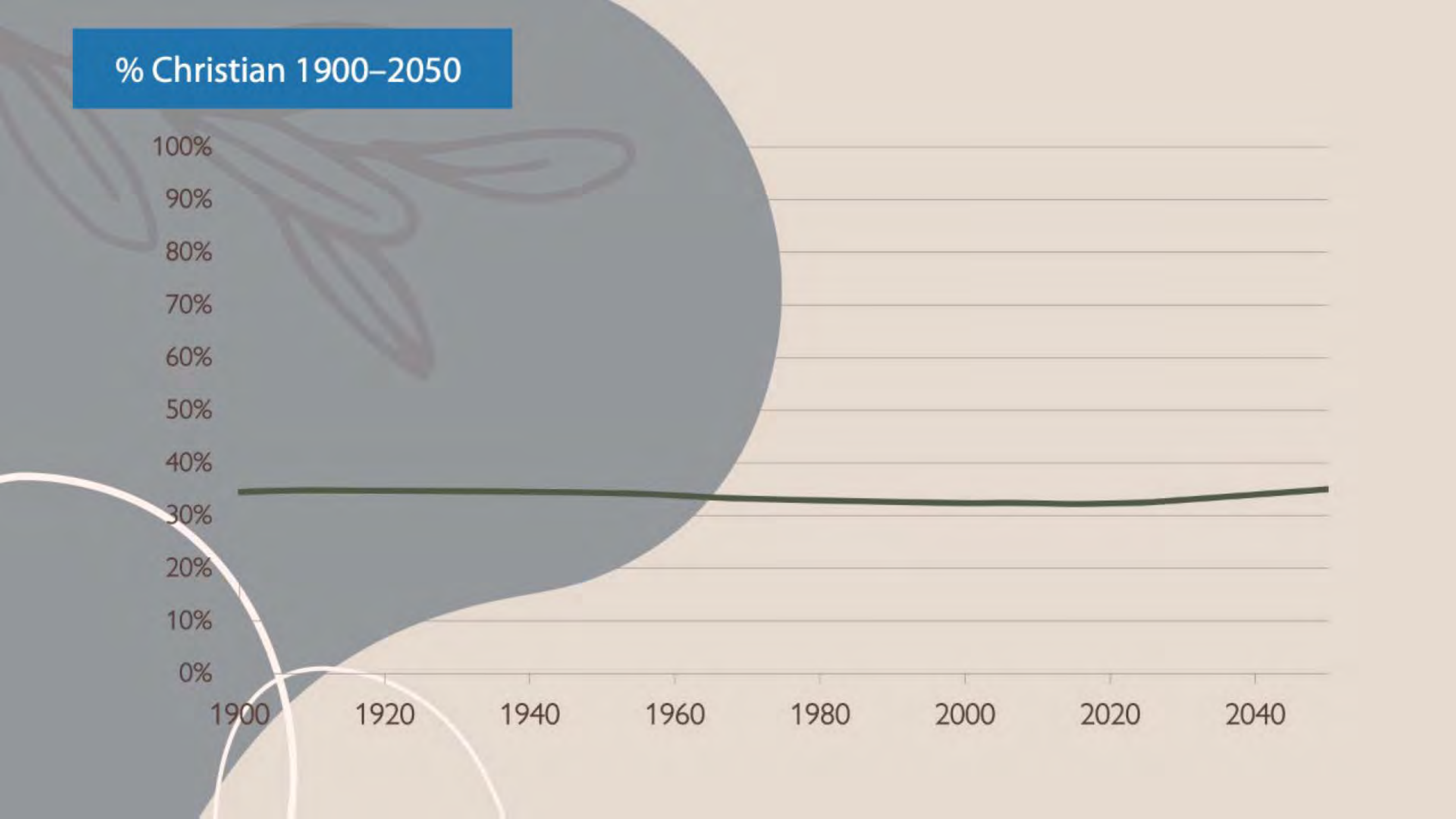
Advance and recession at the same time!!

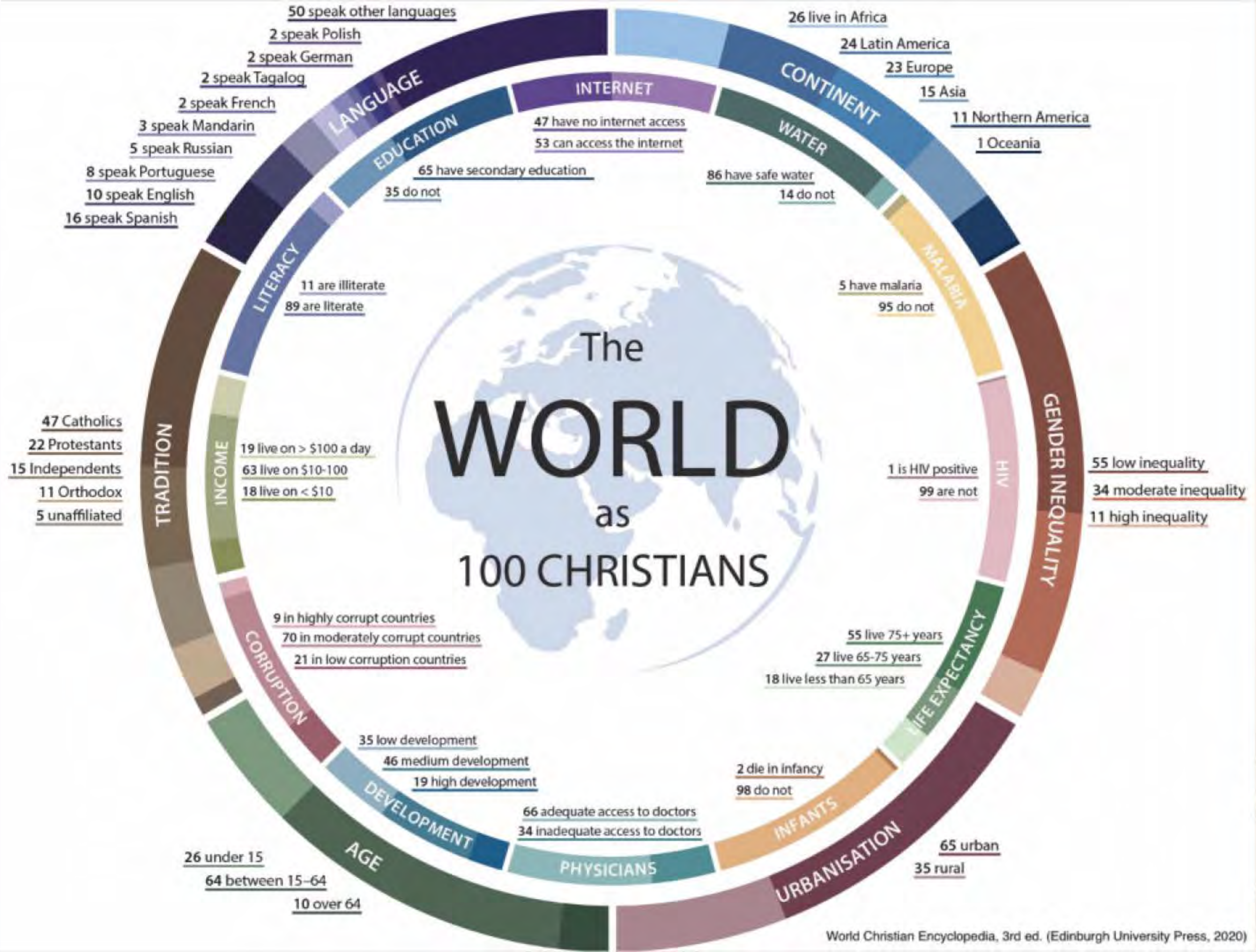
Remarkable re-alignment

% Christian 1900–2050

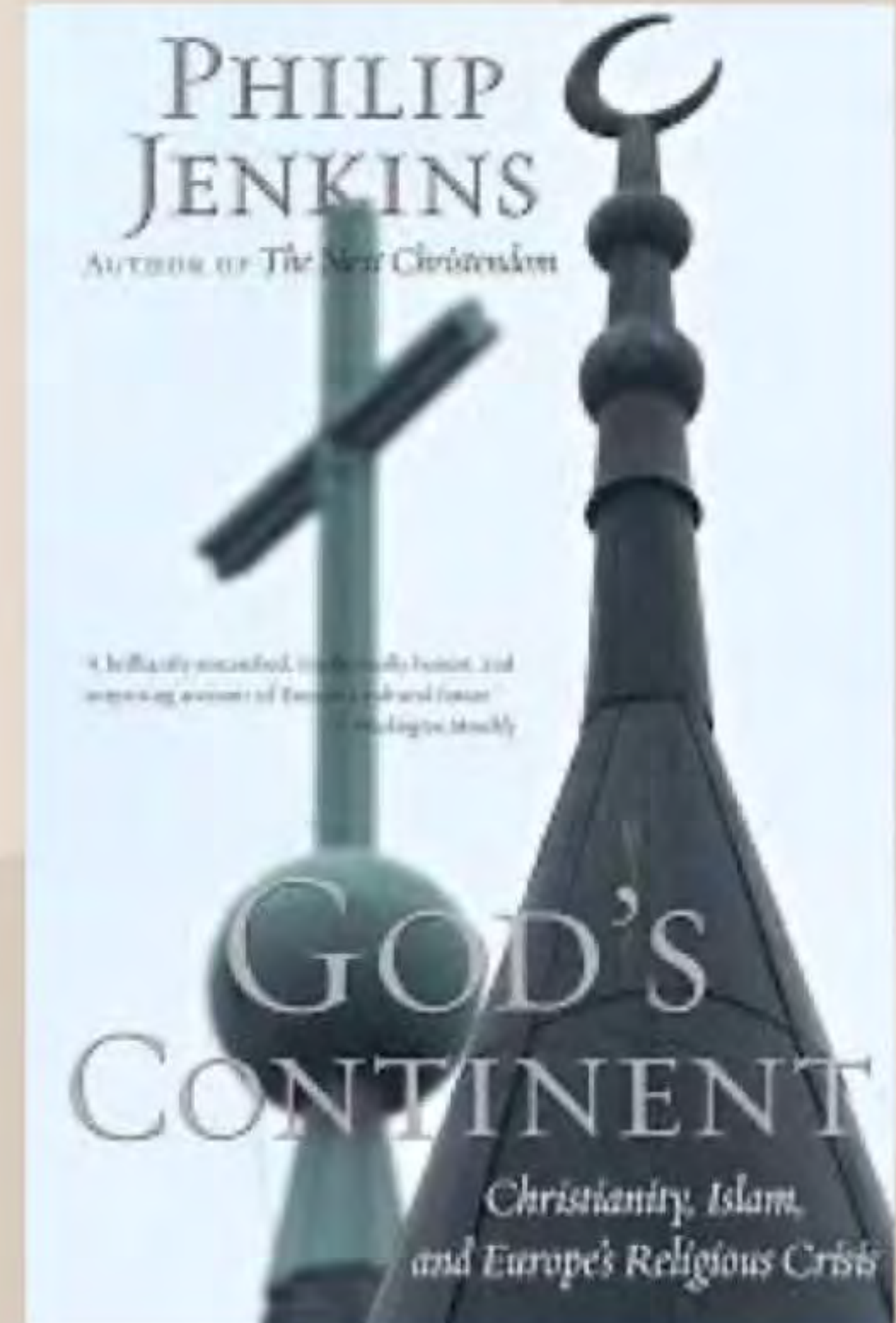
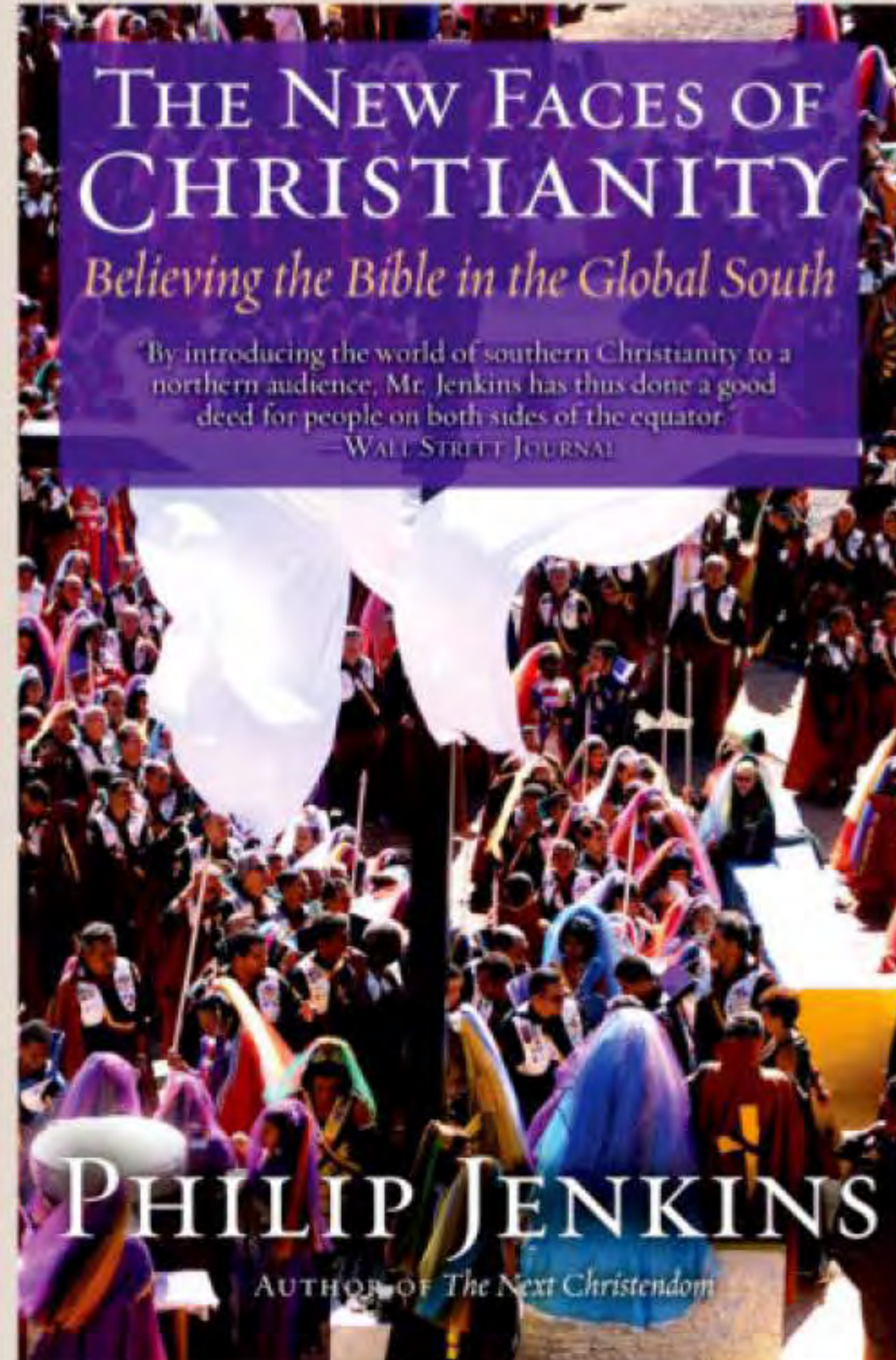
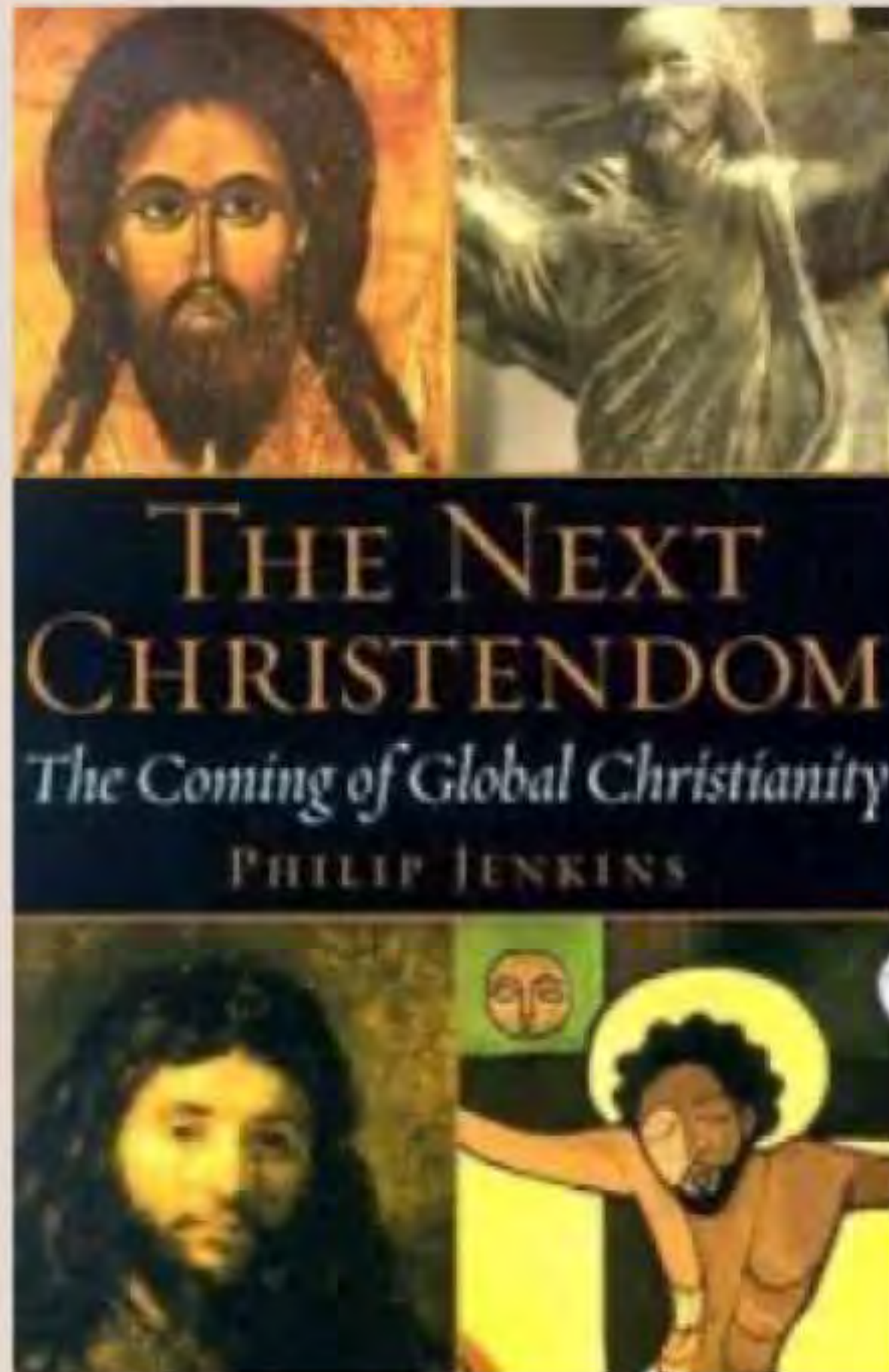
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

1900 1920 1940 1960 1980 2000 2020 2040





The Changing Face of World Christianity



Mean Center of Population for the United States: 1790 to 2020



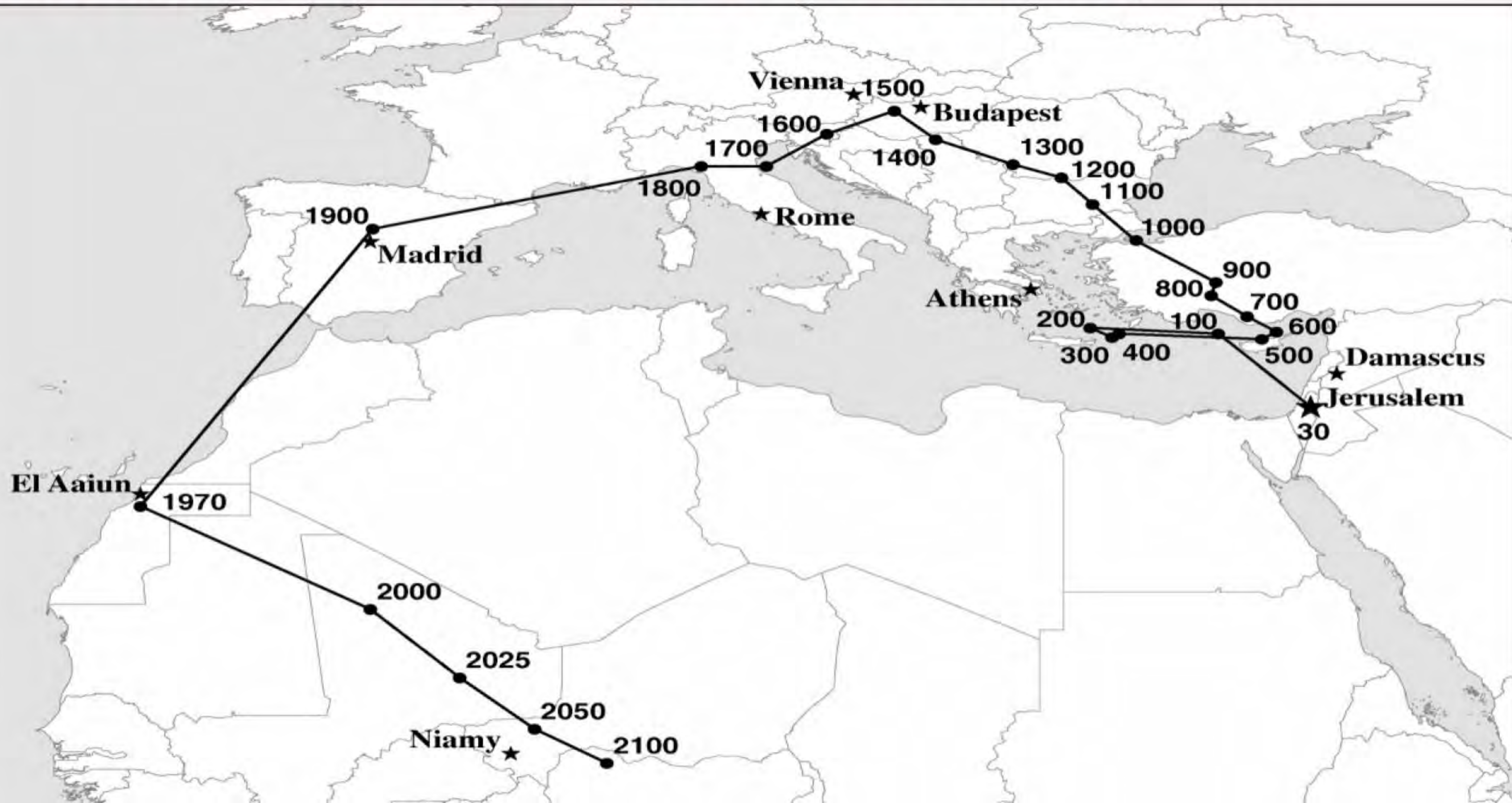
Center of Population of USA, 1790-2020

Hartsfield, Missouri (population 594)



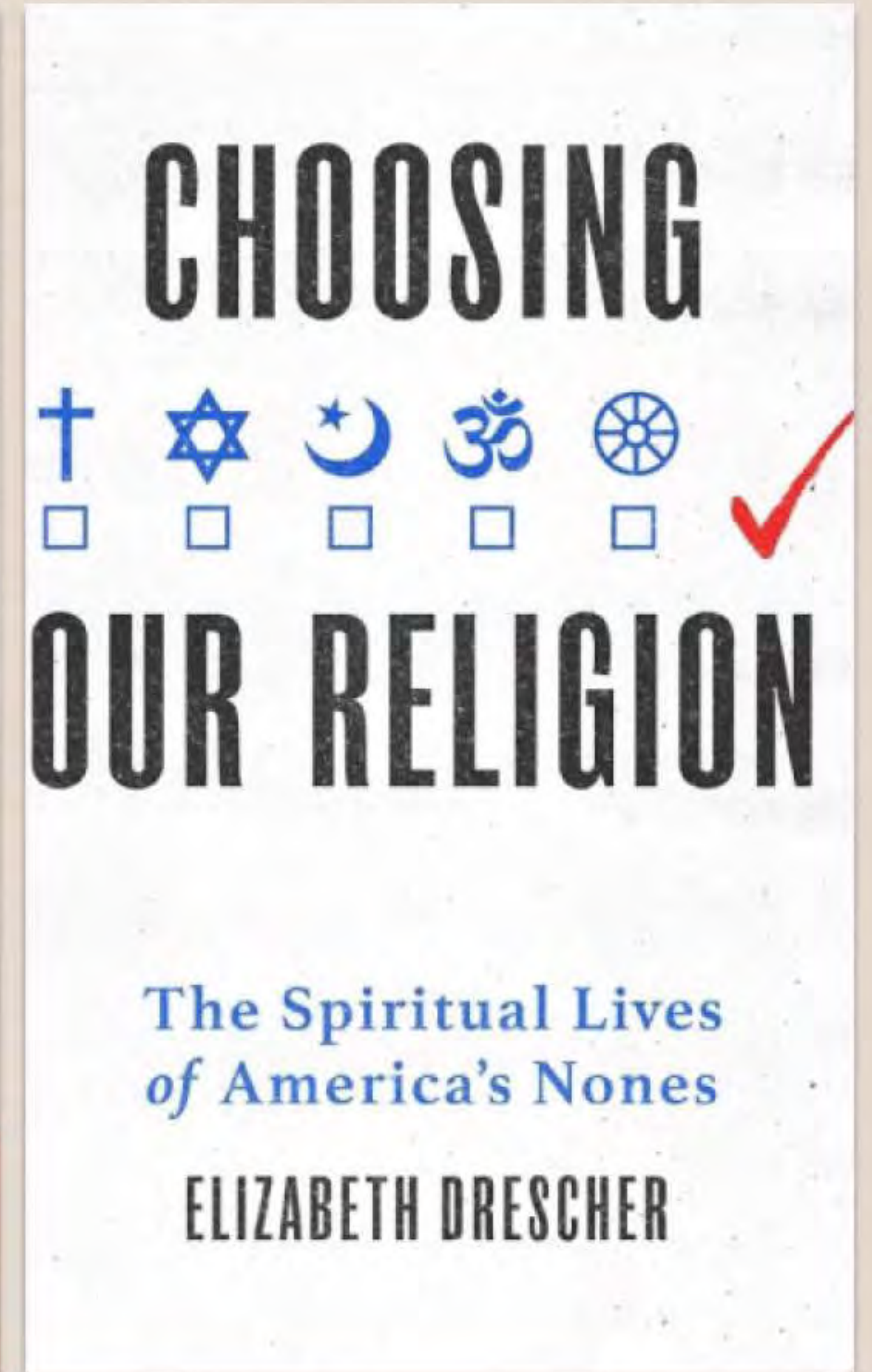
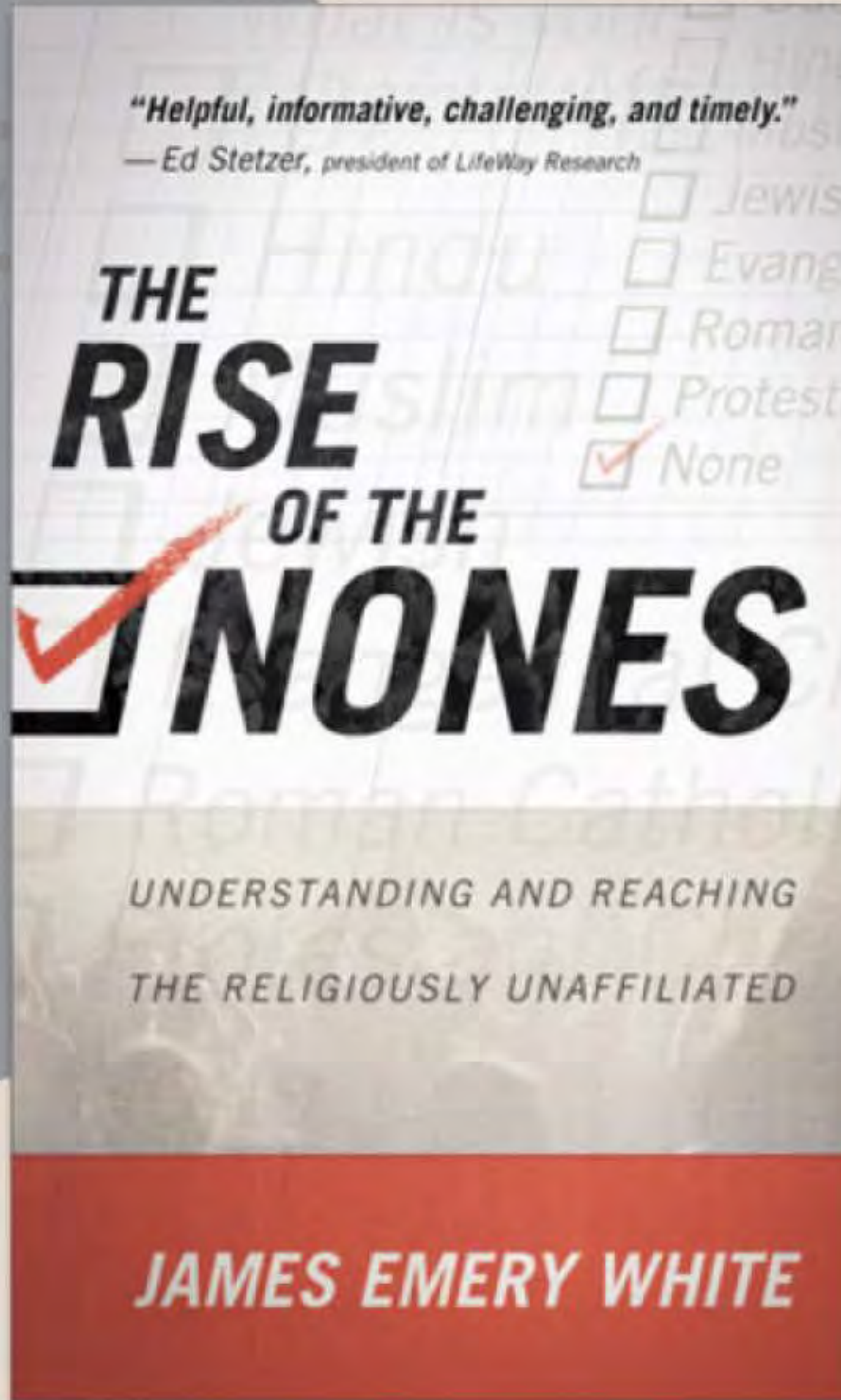
**2020 Center of
Gravity of U.S.
Population**

Shift in the Center of Gravity of World Christianity

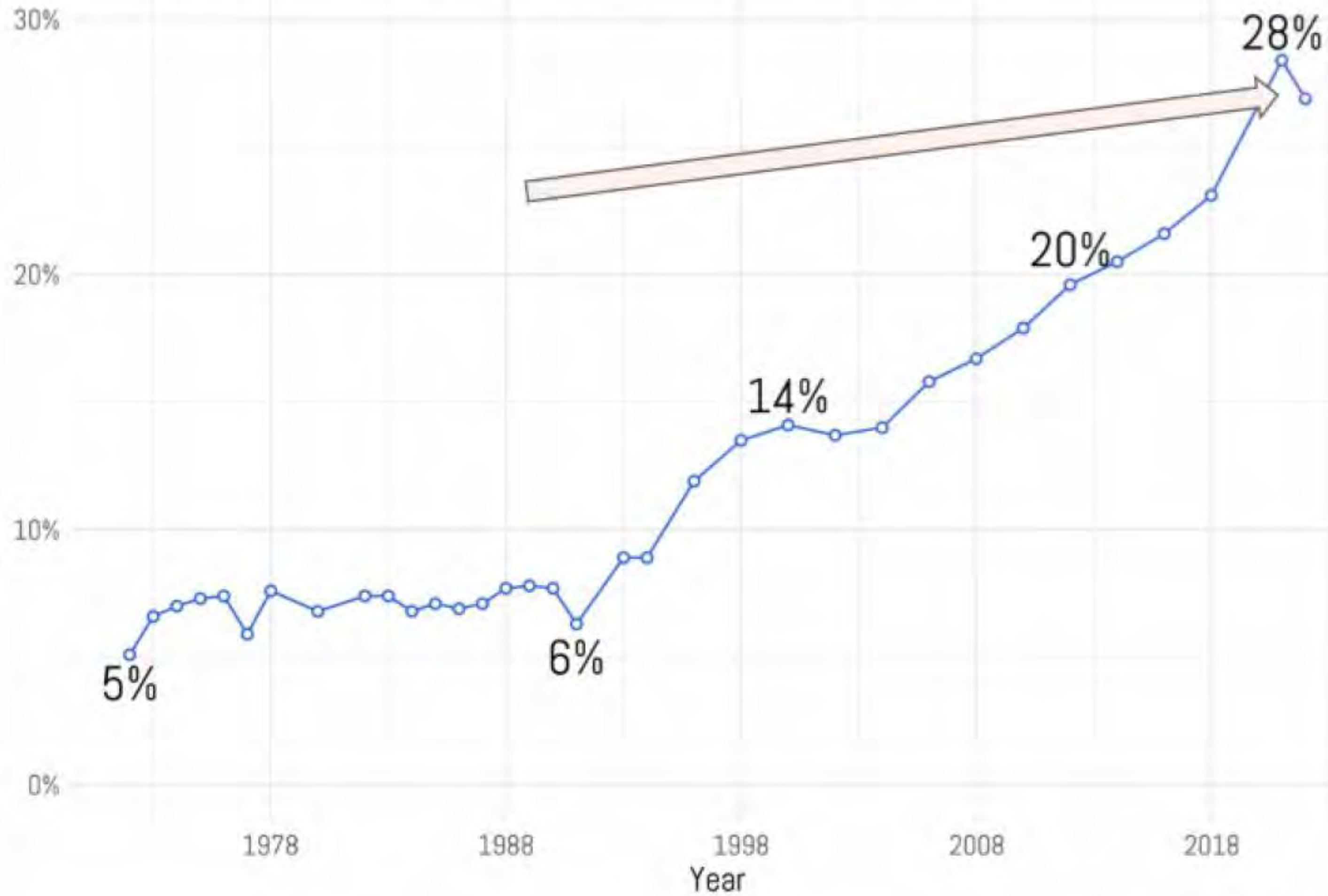


Trends in North American Christianity: 3 Signs

Sign #1: The rise of the 'nones'



The Share of Americans With No Religious Affiliation



@ryanburge

Data: General Social Survey 1972-2022

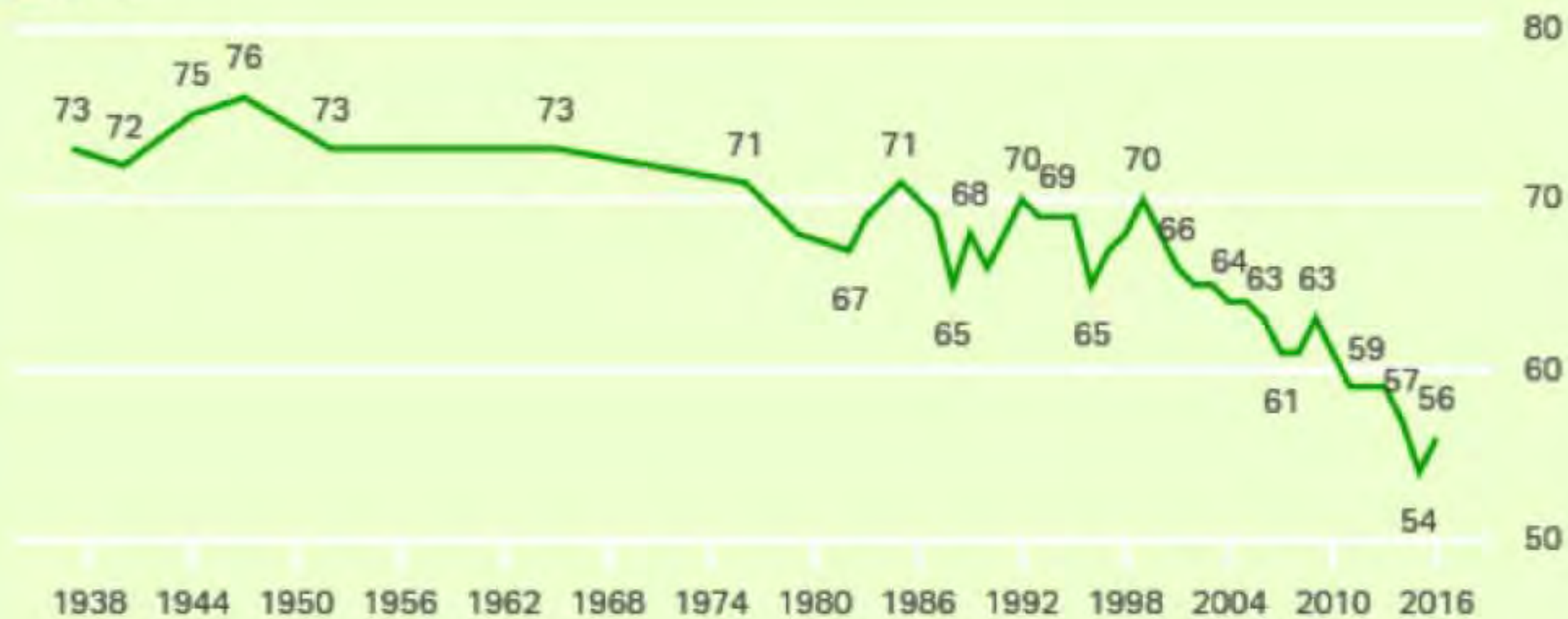
Rise of the “Nones”

https://www.graphsaboutreligion.com/p/the-nones-have-hit-a-ceiling?utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web

Sign #2: Falling “membership” and “attendance”

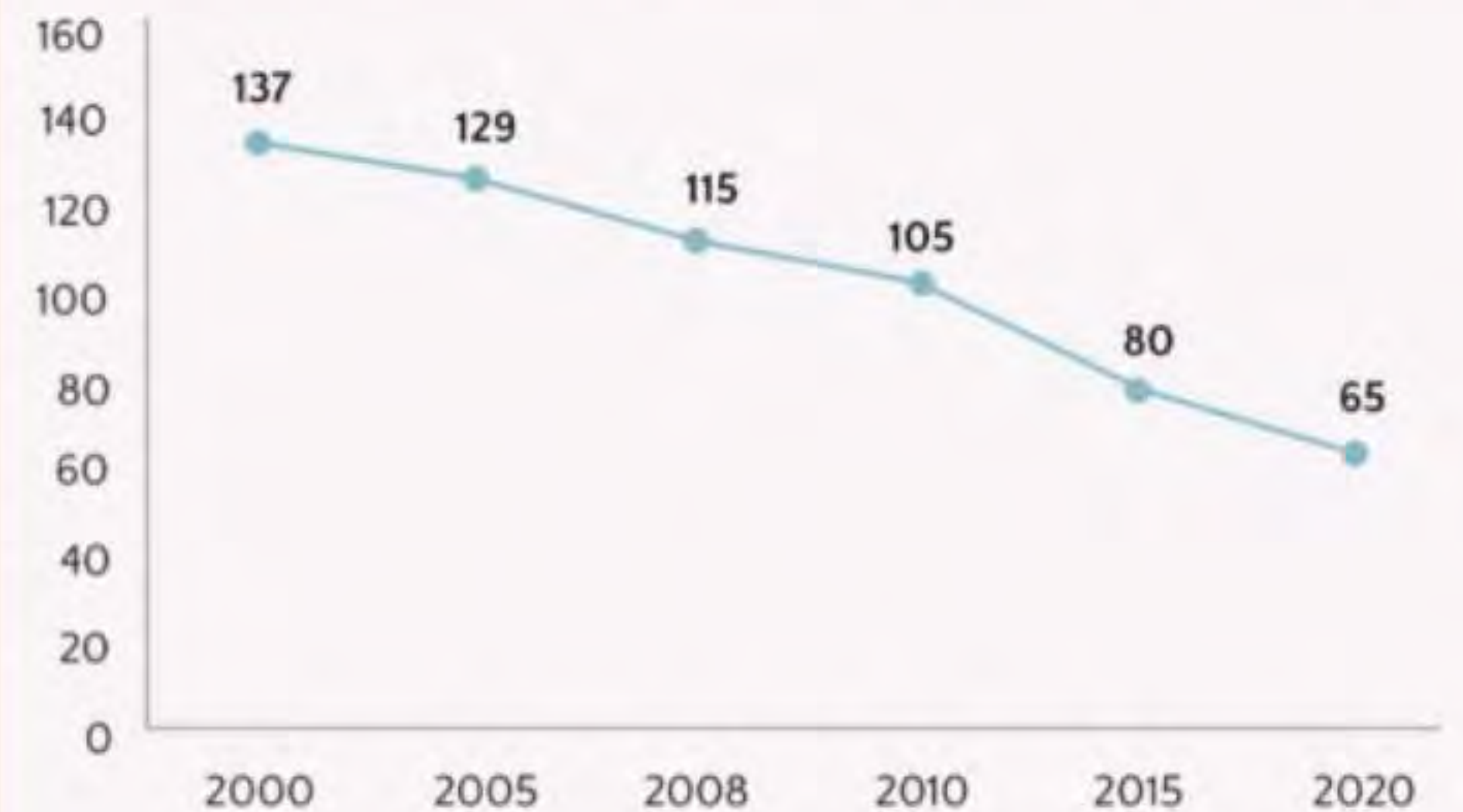
Do you happen to be a member of a church, synagogue or mosque?

■ % Yes



GALLUP

Declining Median Worship Attendance among US Congregations

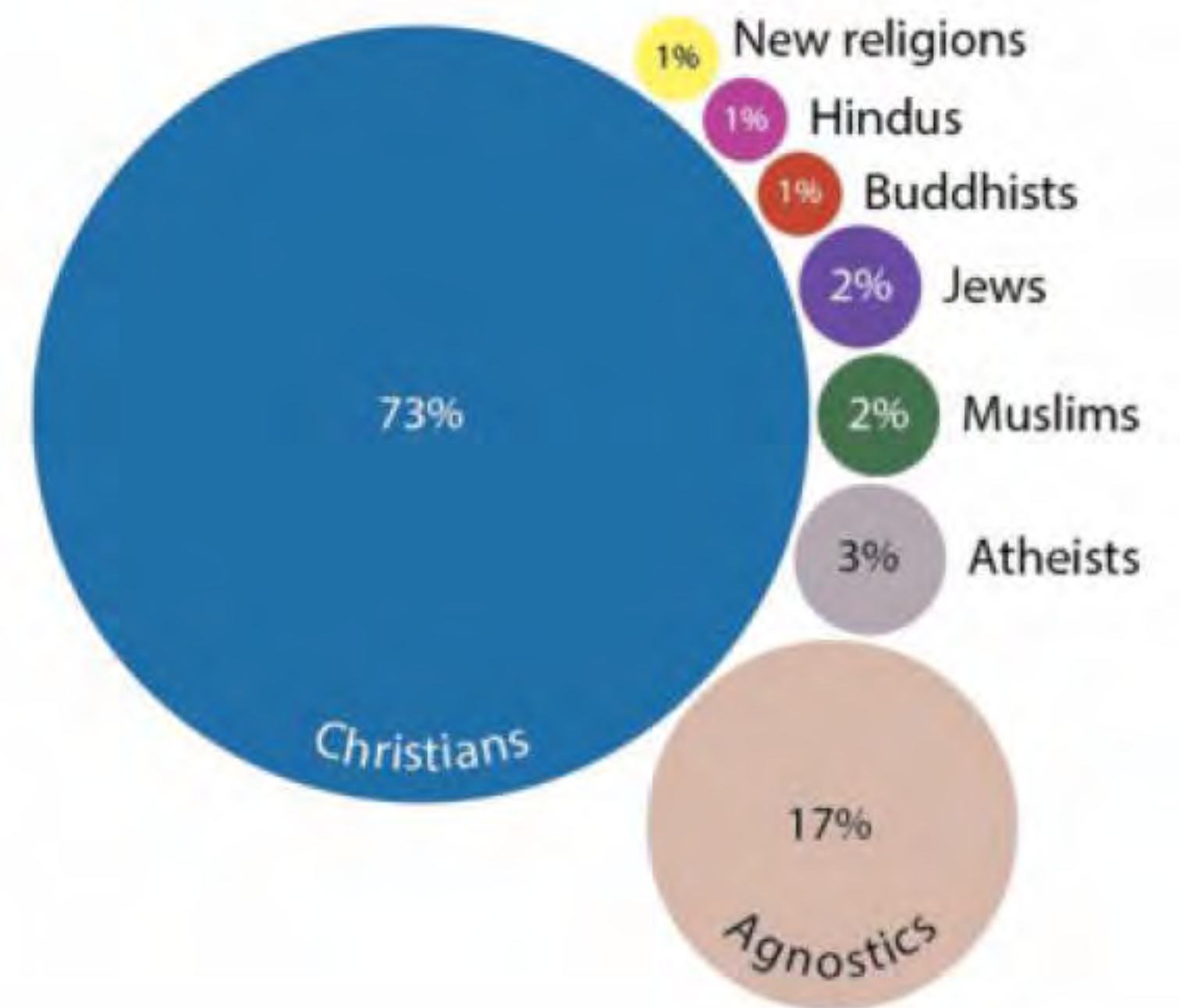
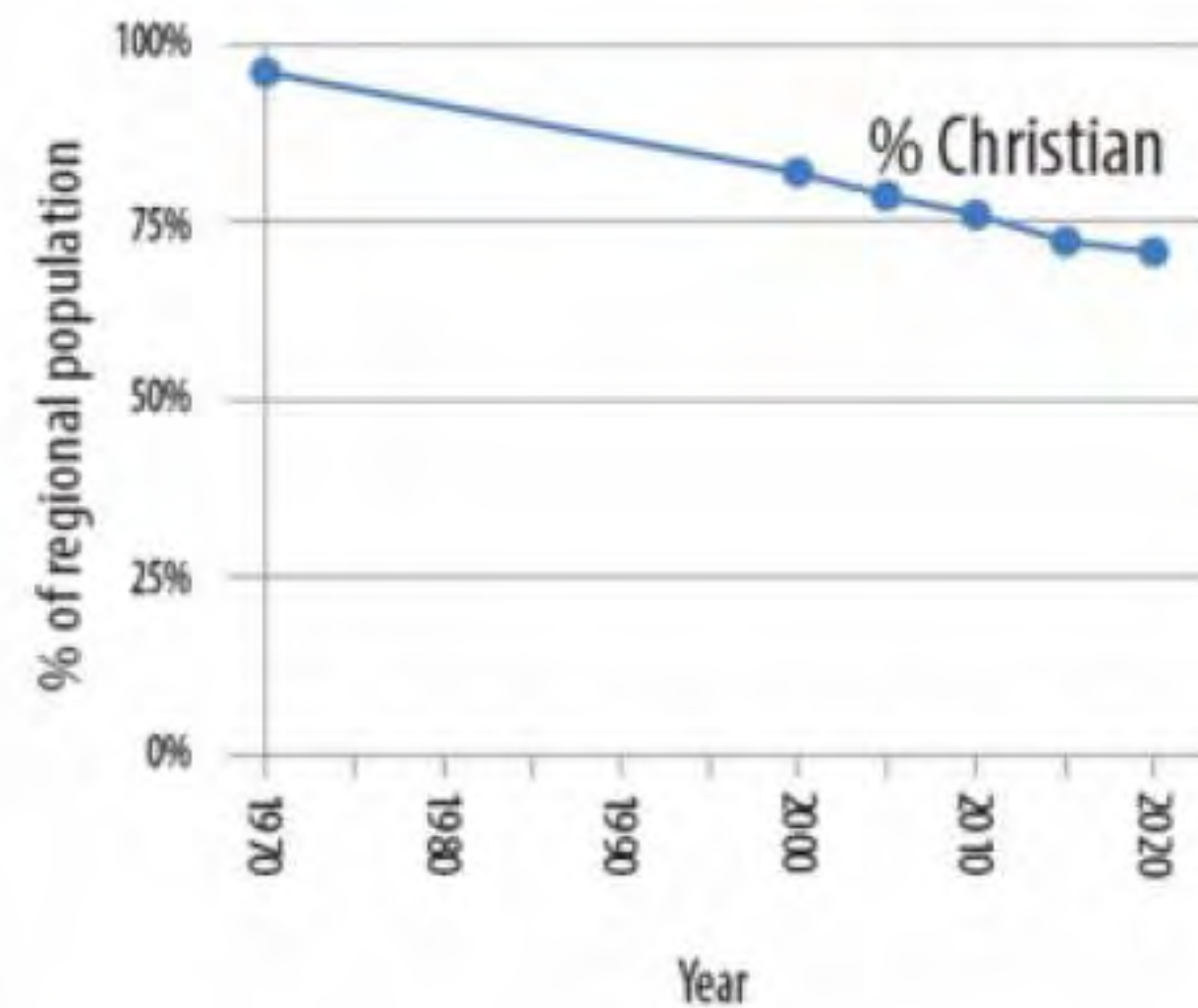


Source: 2020 Faith Communities Today survey; Hartford Institute for Religious Research

North America and Global Christianity

“believing
without
belonging”?

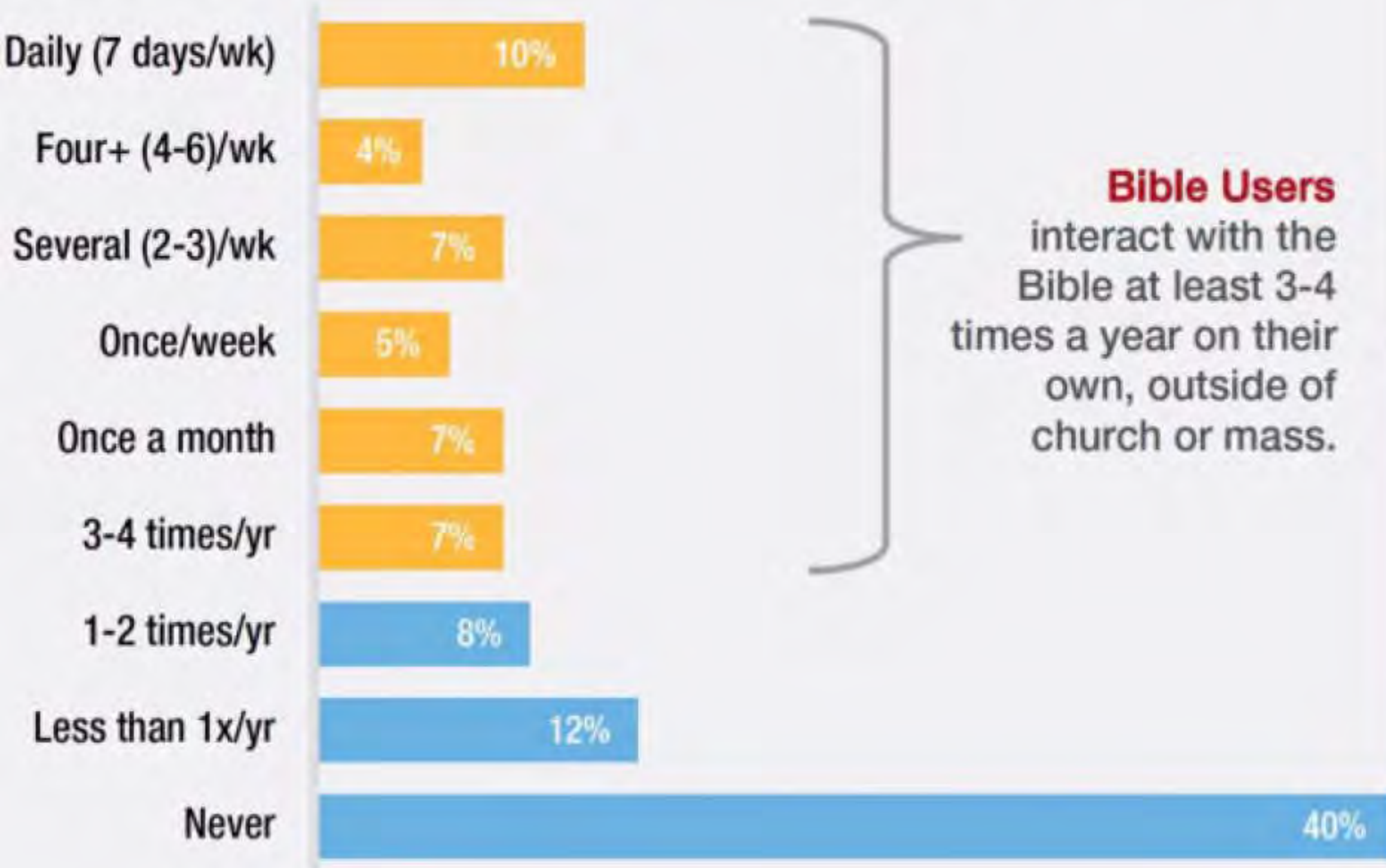
Northern America: Religions



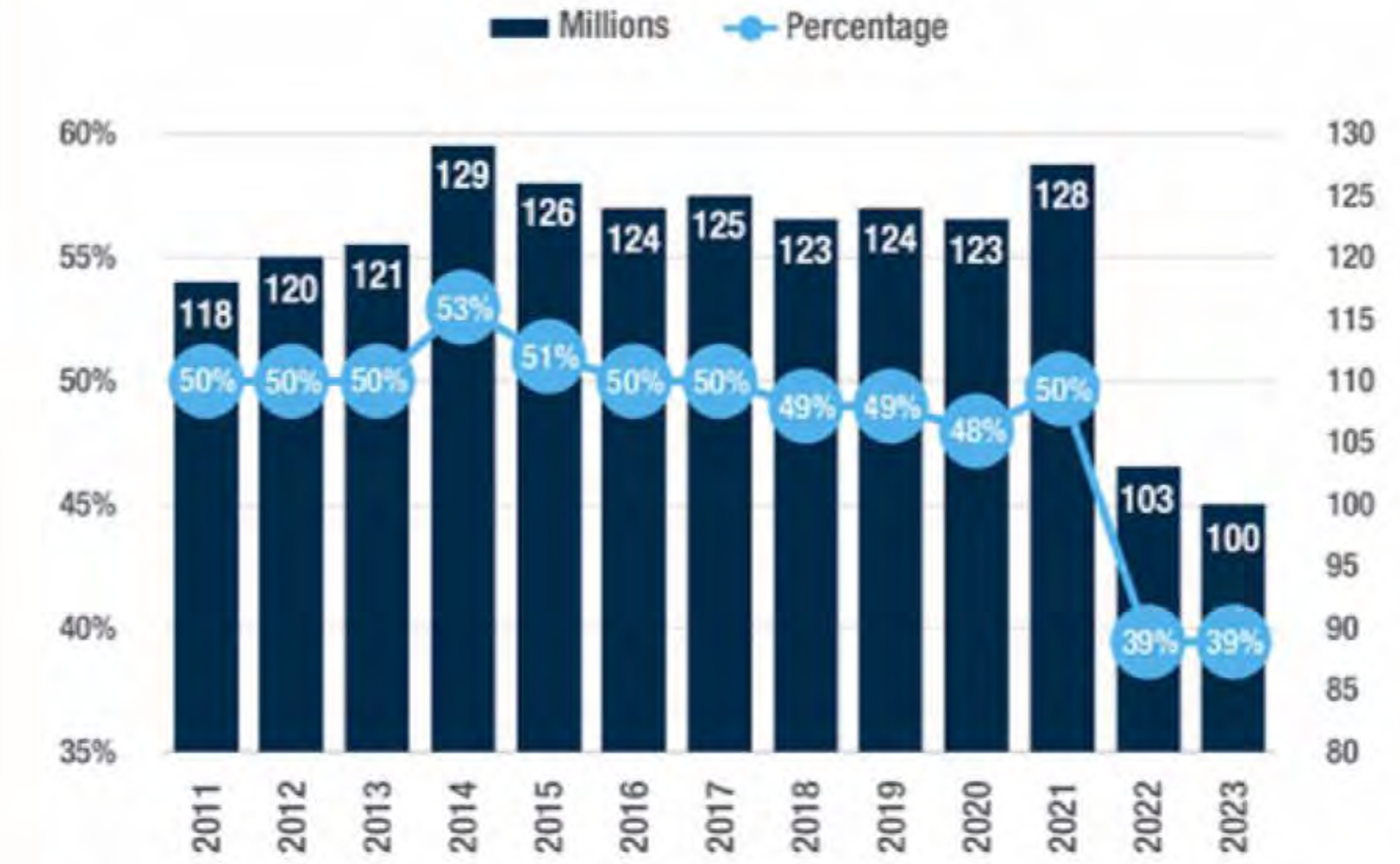
Sign #3: The Fall of Biblical Literacy

Trends in North American Christianity

How often do you use the Bible on your own?



Adult Bible Users 2011-2023



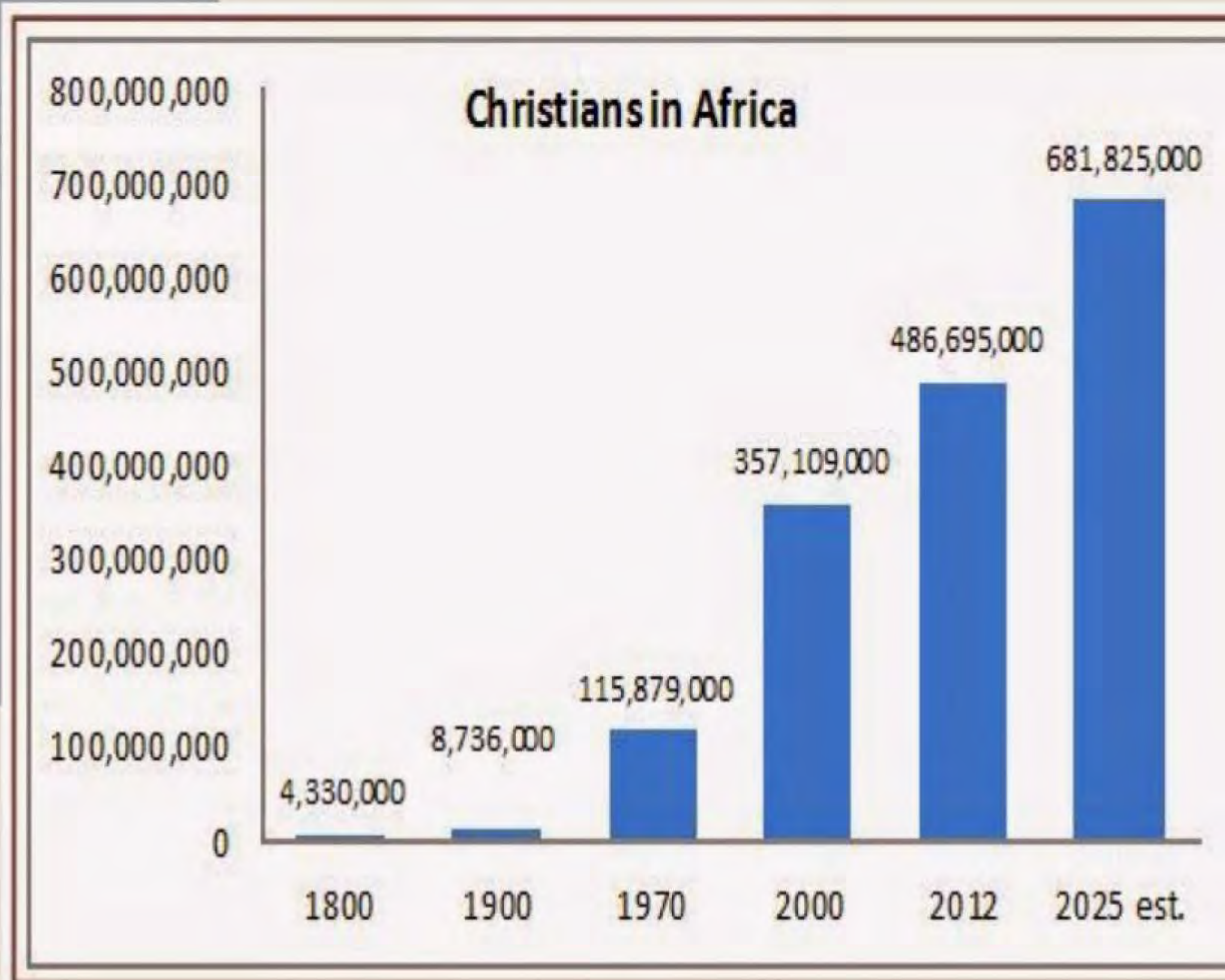
American Bible Society: State of the Bible



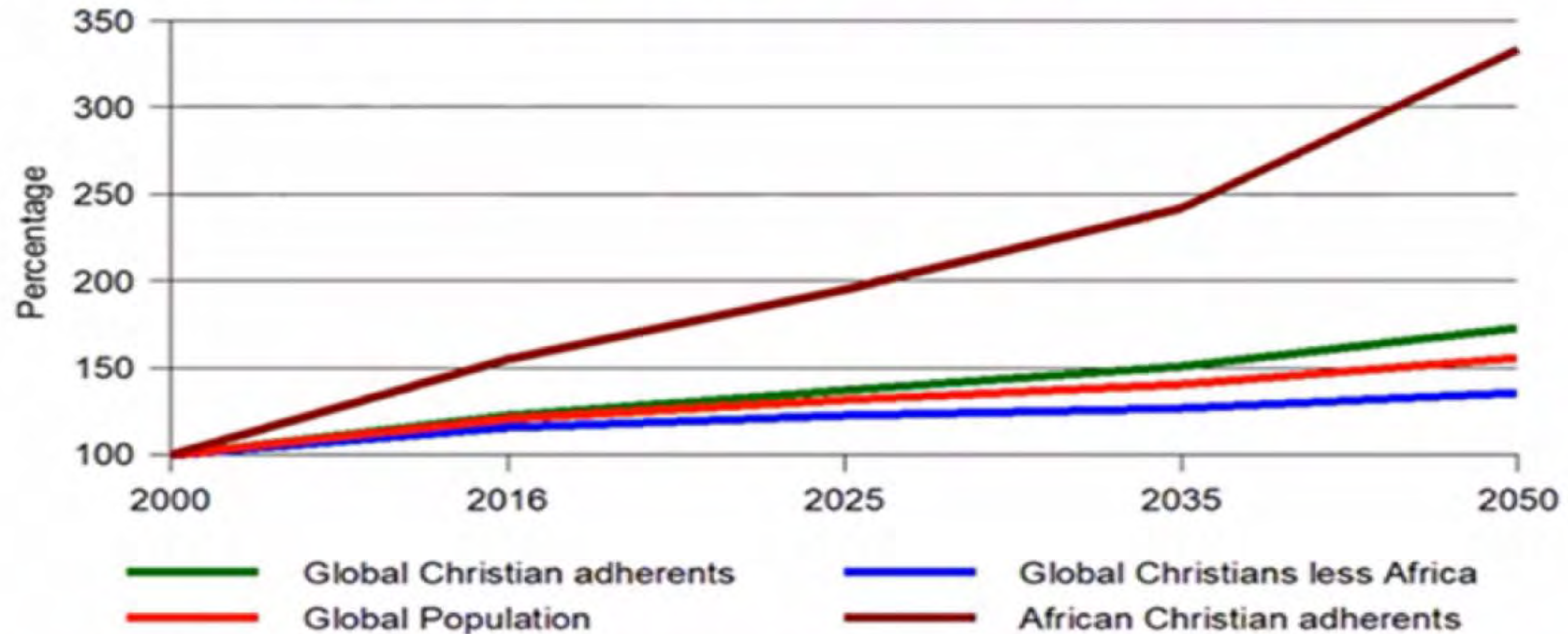




Growth of African Christianity

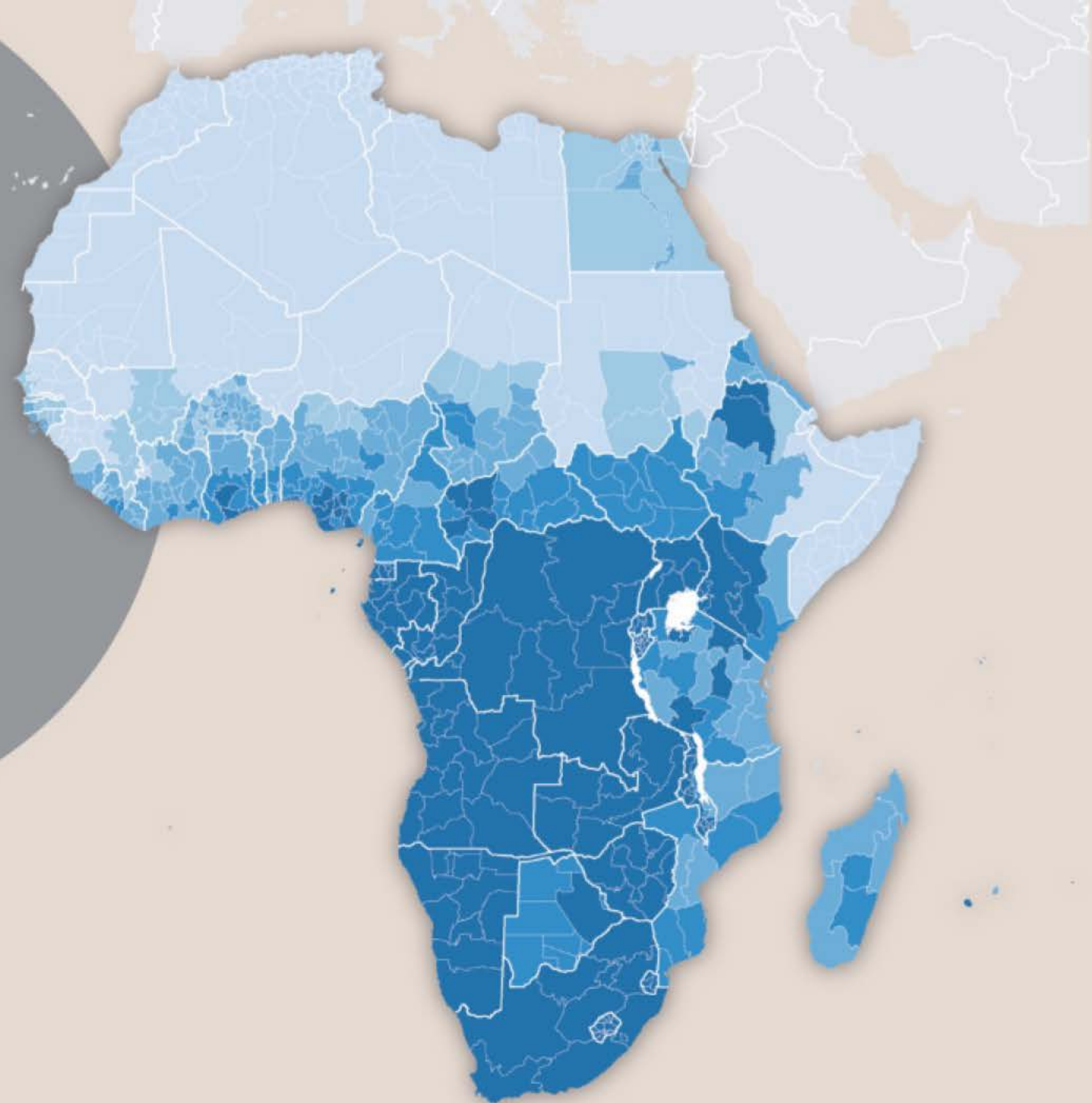
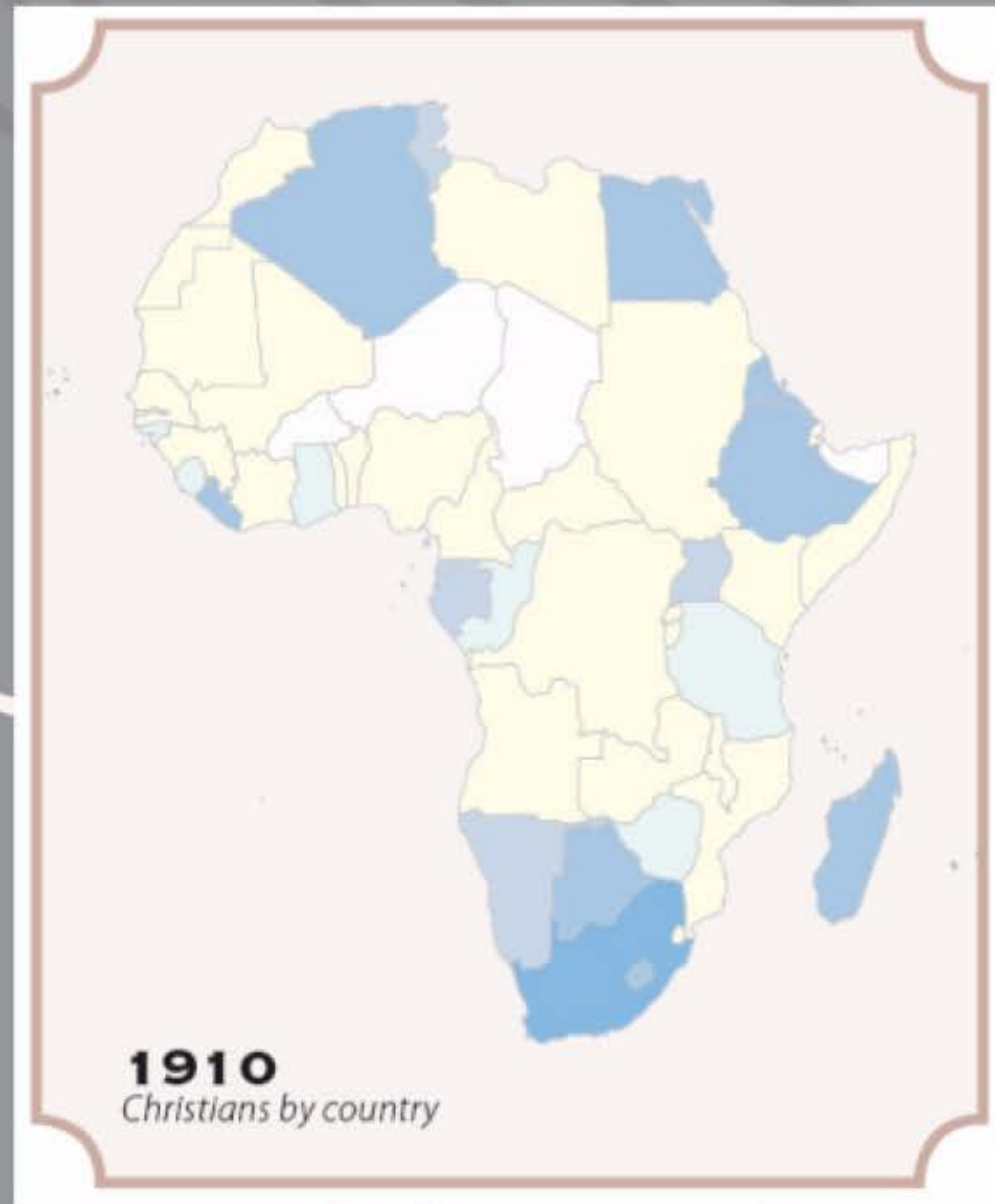


African Christians are the key to global Christian growth



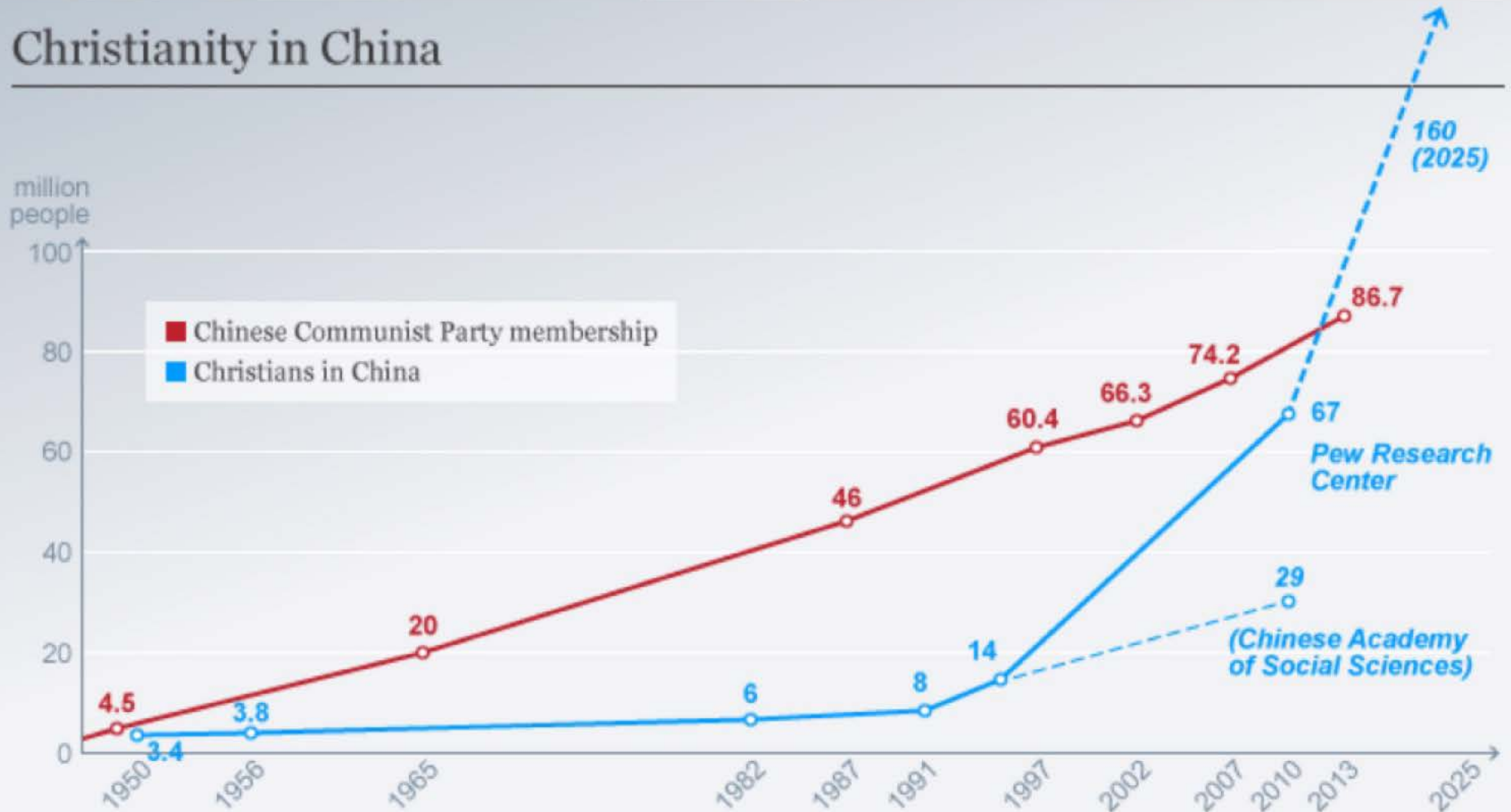
Christian growth without Africa [blue line] would be slower than global population growth

Africa



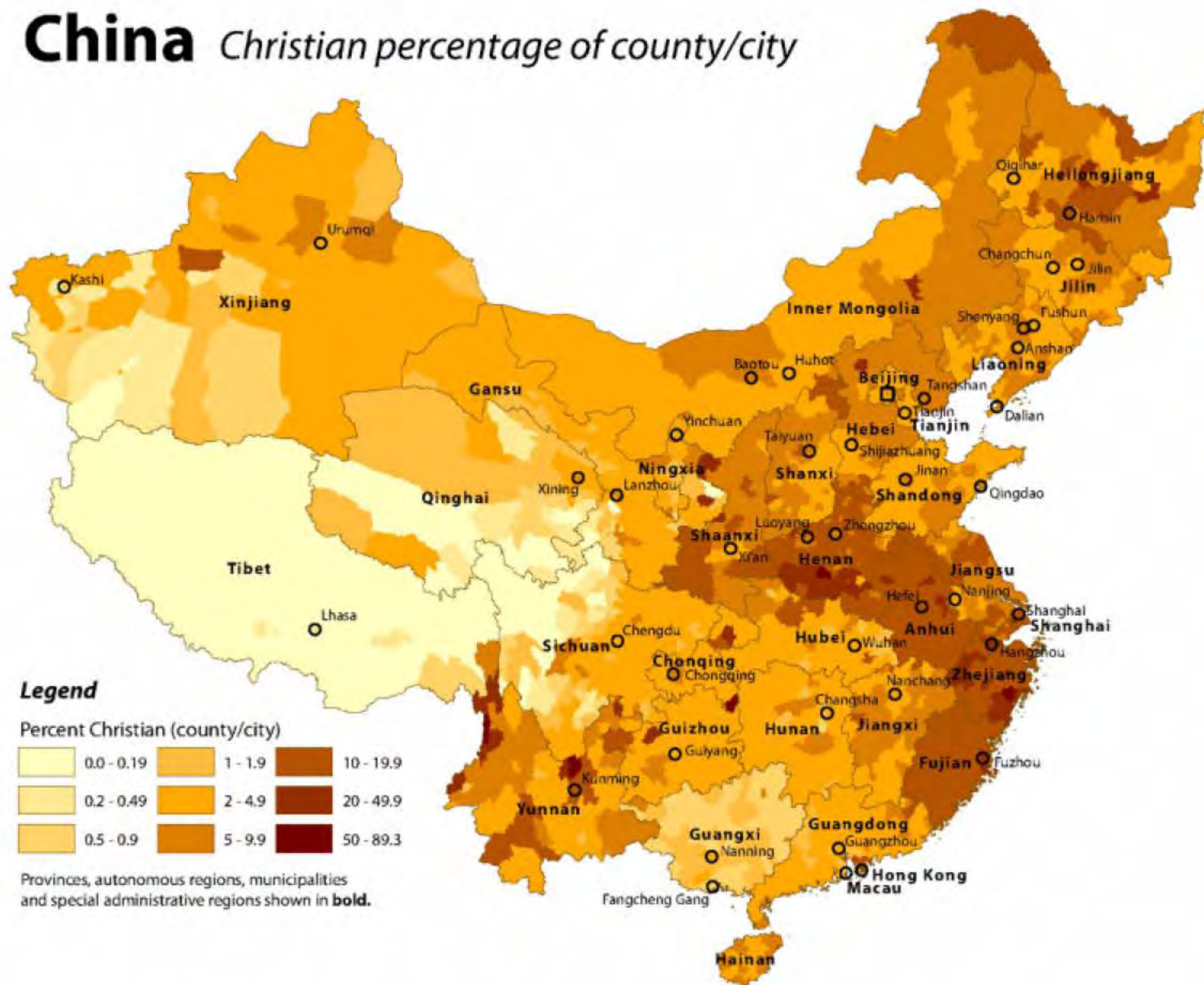
Christianity in China

Christianity in China



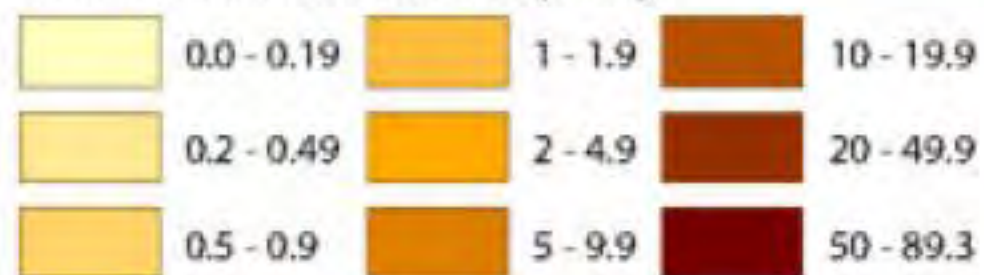
Source: Pew Research Center; Fenggang Yang; People's Daily; chinatoday.com; Xinhua News Agency; Bloomberg; C. Neuhauser © DW

China *Christian percentage of county/city*



Legend

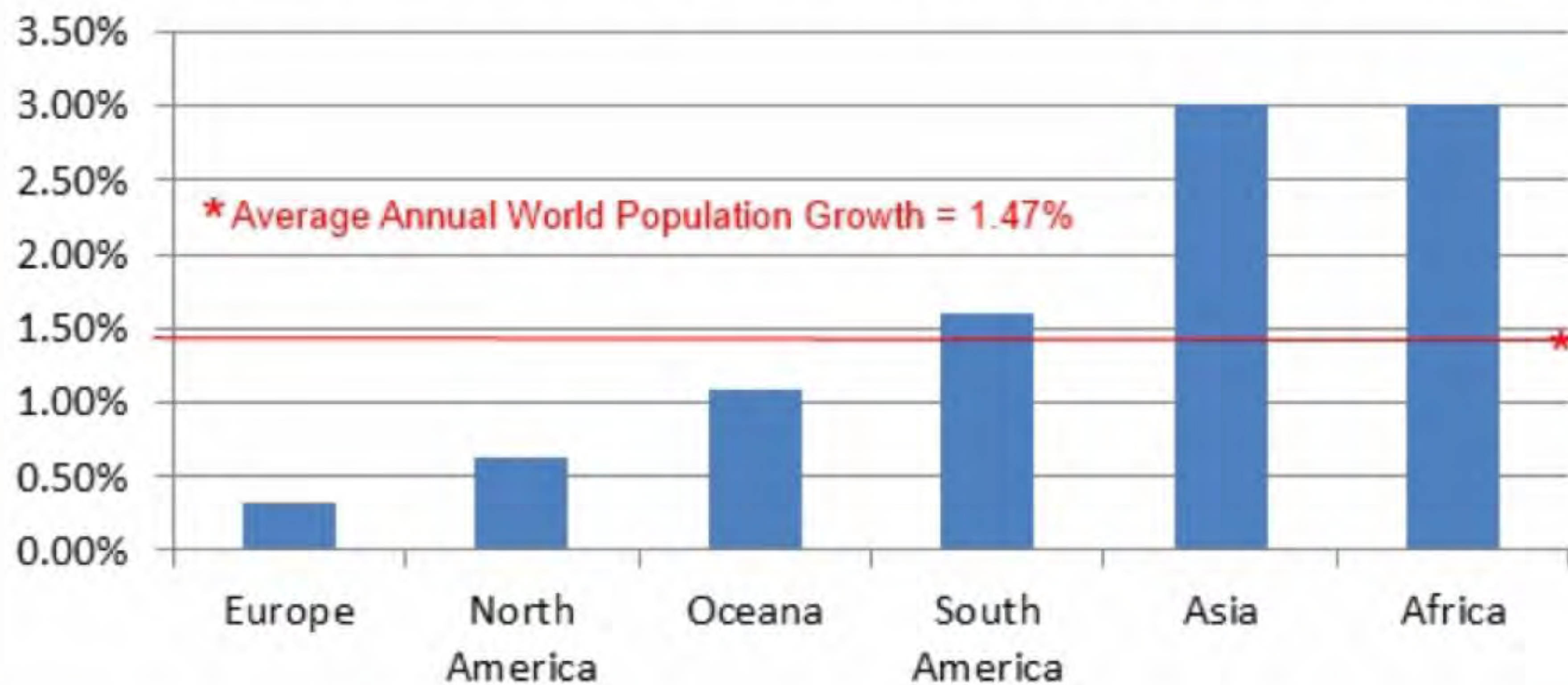
Percent Christian (county/city)



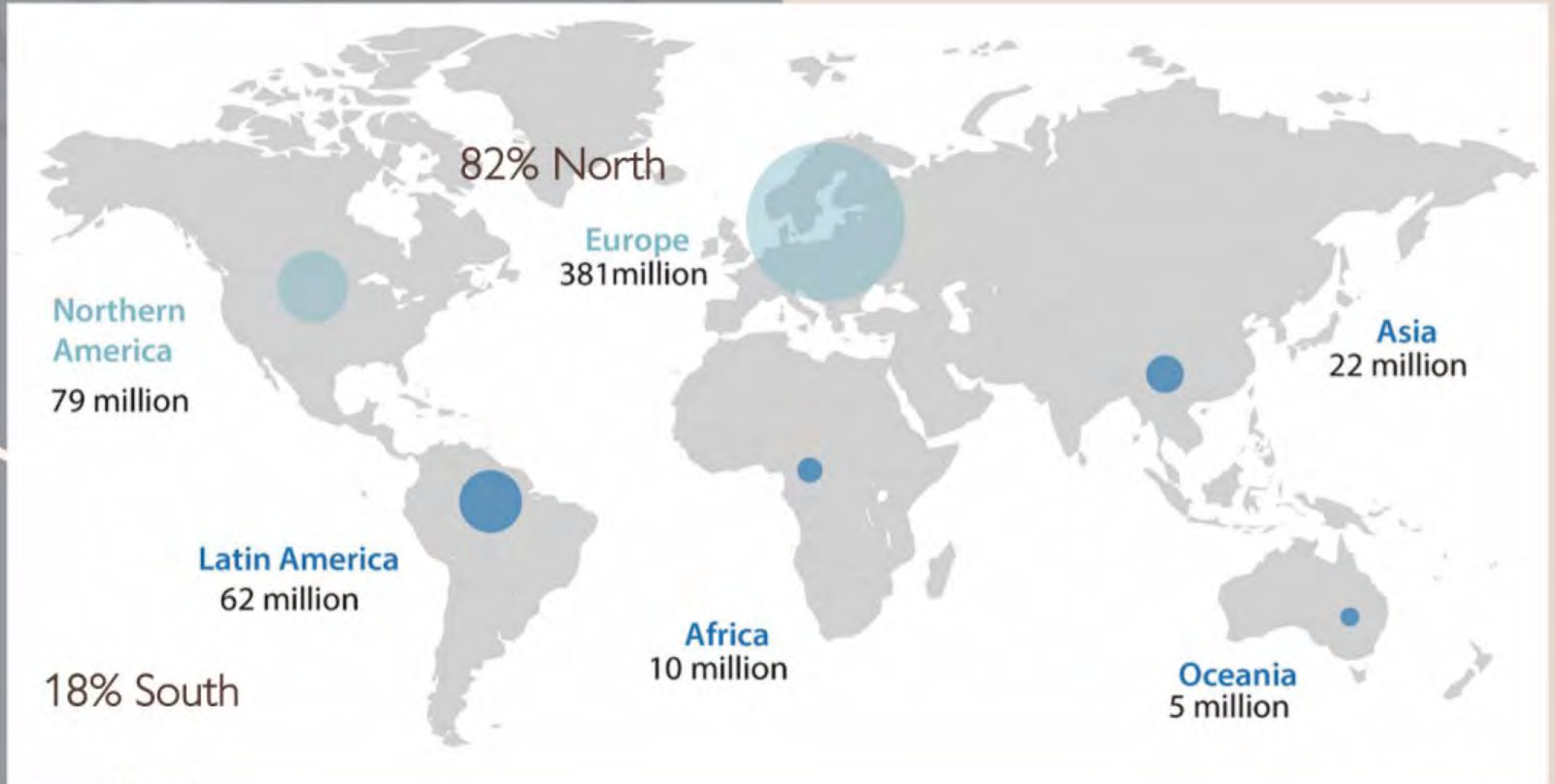
Provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities and special administrative regions shown in **bold**.



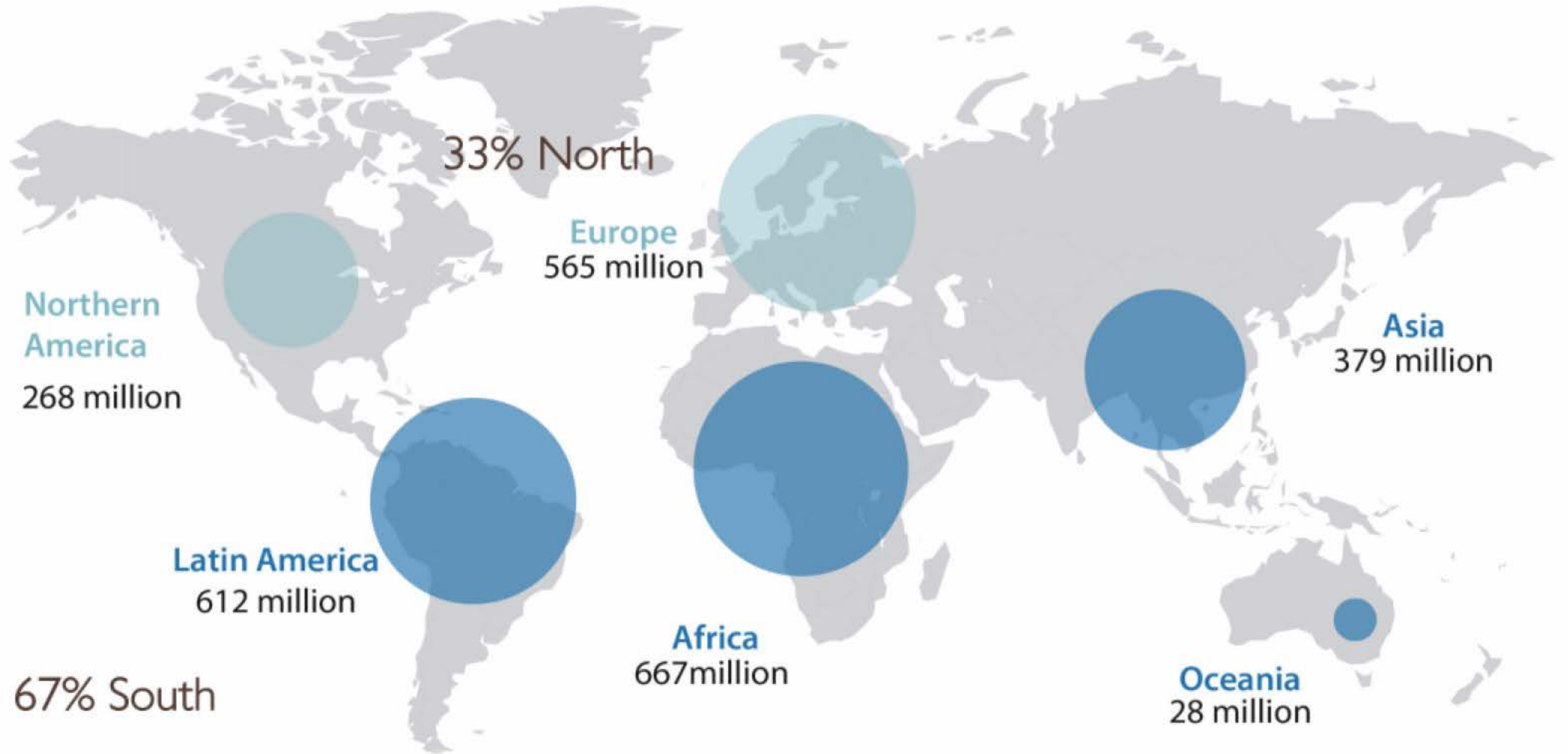
Christian Average Annual Growth Rate



Christians by continent, 1900



Christians by continent, 2020



Christianity was a white religion



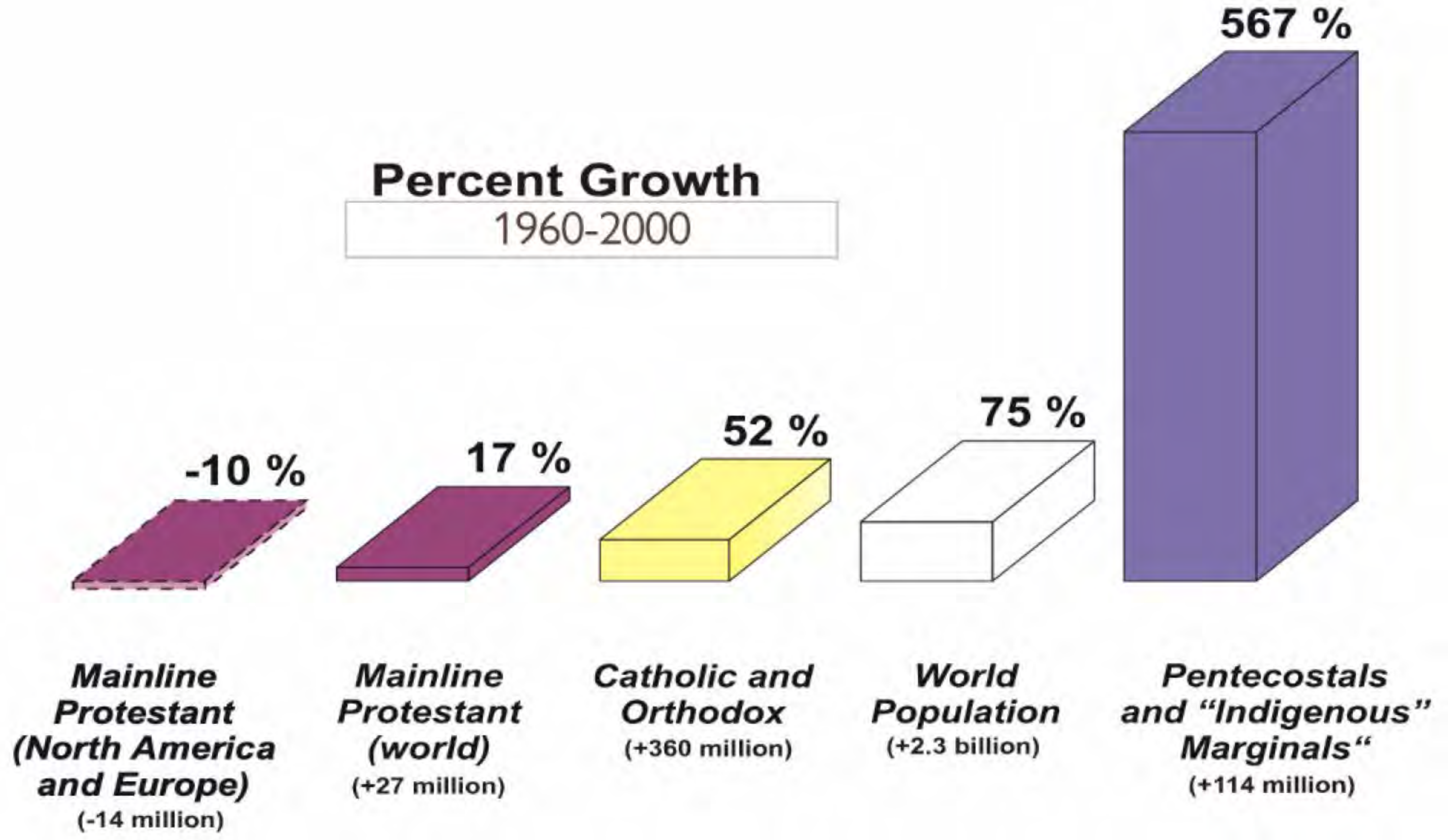
Now it is global



World Christianity



Percent Growth 1960-2000



May God bless the GMC
in Alabama and around
the world.. May we be
“global” “Methodist”
and a “church”



2025 NORTH ALABAMA ANNUAL CONFERENCE



June 12 - 14, 2025 • Trussville, AL • Clearbranch Methodist Church