

Beyond Christendom:
Protestant-Catholic Distinctions in Coming Global Christianity

Final Draft

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Abstract

Using actual and projected population data from the World Christian Database, this article qualifies, specifies and in part counters Philip Jenkins' argument that the center of global Christianity is moving from the Euro-American center (the "global North") to the developing world (the "global South") by disaggregating the different outcomes of this shift for Protestants and Catholics. Over the next 50 years, Catholics will decline much less than Protestants in the North, and will concentrate in Latin America, not Africa. With the decline of the Enlightenment nation-state, religious authority and identity will become more concentrated in Catholicism but more dispersed in Protestantism. This transition from national to global Christianity, I argue, will fundamentally realign the post-Reformation achievement of balanced tension among three social realities—Protestantism, Catholicism, and the nation-state—to produce, not just another Christendom, but a new, more complex, articulation of civil and religious realities that will move beyond the old arrangement of Christendom altogether.

Contents

I. Introduction.....	3
II. Data.....	4
II. Distinguishing Protestants and Catholics.....	5
African Protestants, Latino Catholics.....	6
Liberal North vs. Conservative South?.....	10
From National to Global.....	14
Protestant Particularity vs. Catholic Centrality.....	18
III. Conclusion.....	23

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I. Introduction

Over the next generation, as the remaining societies of the world traverse the demographic transition, the preponderance of world population will shift to the continents of what is now known as the developing world, principally Africa and Asia. On a planet that is rapidly democratizing and globalizing, it is inevitable that this shift will be accompanied by global political and economic realignments. Cultural historians have also predicted an attendant shift in world culture, a decline of the West and/or clash of civilisations. Recently Philip Jenkins has given further shape to this discussion by proposing that global demographic realignments will lead to a fundamental reorientation and revitalization of Christianity. Jenkins notes that the Christian religion in very traditional forms is being rapidly adopted in the (swiftly-growing) developing world, while it, and its traditional expressions a fortiori, is stagnant or declining in the (stable or shrinking) developed world. As a result, in a generation or two the vast majority of Christians will be nonwhite, traditional, and not of European origin. This portends a major realignment of the center of Christian culture from the global North (developed world) to the global South (developing world). As in the Middle Ages, when Christianity formed an “overarching unity and focus of loyalty transcending mere kingdoms” (2002a:10), the growth of Christianity in the South will lead to the rise of a powerful global Christian culture and identity and the corresponding decline of national loyalties, in the establishment of what Jenkins proposes will be (as he titles his book) “The Next Christendom”.

Christianity, however, comes with a number of competing doctrinal and institutional divisions, principally (though by no means solely) that between Protestant and Catholic. In this

essay I argue that these differences call Jenkins' thesis into question, requiring it to be (at minimum) qualified and specified in ways that are consequential for its accuracy. The effect of the global restructuring of world population and Christians will be quite different for Catholics than for Protestants. In general, population shifts will be both more complicated and less transforming for the Catholic Church than Jenkins suggests. The shift from North to South will be much less extreme, with a countervailing shift from South to North. The Africanization of the Church will be much less pronounced than its Latinization. While the Catholic Church grows in the South, it will not decline, as does Protestantism, in the North. The conservative/liberal divide among Catholics, moreover, is much less aligned with a South/North axis than may be true for Protestants. Due to their divergent relations to the nation-state as a social form, Protestantism is much less likely to develop a centralized authority structure or culture consistent with a new Christendom than is Catholicism. These differences also call into question Jenkins' predictions regarding the global dominance of Christianity and the development of a transnational Christian identity. Taken together, Protestant/Catholic differences in the coming population shifts suggest that, rather than renewing a common Christian culture or church order, church-state relations around the globe are more likely to reflect new, more complex, articulations of civil and religious realities that will move even further beyond the old arrangement of Christendom altogether.

II. Data

The primary data source for this analysis is the World Christian Database (WCD: Johnson 2004), an exhaustive repository of demographic and institutional indicators on world religions maintained by the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. The WCD provides almost 400 variables on 238 countries, all major and

minor world religions, including over 9,000 separate Christian denominations, for six points in time from 1900 and projected to 2050.

It should be borne in mind that population projections are always perilous, subject to unforeseen changes that undermine the accuracy of the predicted trends. For this reason this study, as does Jenkins', can only reasonably examine broad general trends. Because this caution applies to all demographic projections, however, the WCD database is the most pertinent resource for this study, since it is the source of information for the World Christian Encyclopedia (Barrett 2001), upon which Jenkins (2002a, 2002b) bases his argument. Thus it allows us to examine Jenkins' claims on the basis of the same evidence he analyzes. Moreover, while not perfect, for the purpose of examining broad trends, the WCD is probably the best source of information on world religions currently available. Its main weakness is that it must rely on institutionally derived information, and applies estimates or interpolates when such information is missing; hence the quality of the data may be uneven. However, aggressive attempts are made to be thorough and accurate in obtaining institutional measures, and estimation procedures, when used, are conservative and thoroughly documented. A comparison of summary information for three U.S. denominations that independently publish institutional data—the Roman Catholic Church, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Episcopal Church—found no significant variance on numbers of parishioners, parishes, or pastors reported for the year 2000.

II. Distinguishing Protestants and Catholics

For Jenkins, Christianity in the global North is “headed South” in both a literal and figurative sense: literally, as the centre of the Christian population shifts to Africa and Latin America, and figuratively, as the formerly dominant North enters a secularized post-Christian era. Crucial to his thesis of a coming Christendom is the prediction that Latin American and

African Christianity will align in a common Christian culture. Although currently “the two continents belong almost to different planets”, Jenkins argues that “a period of mutual discovery is inevitable” as Christianity grows rapidly in both. “Once that axis is established”, he concludes, “we really would be speaking of a new Christendom, based in the Southern Hemisphere” (2002a: 12). However, in both the literal and figurative senses noted above, the shifts in population will be quite different for Catholics than for Protestants.

African Protestants, Latino Catholics

While the Catholic demographic center is, like Protestantism, moving from north to south, for Catholics the move is from a different north to a different south. In broad terms, the Protestant center is shifting from North America to Africa; the Catholic population center is shifting, somewhat less radically, from Europe to Latin America.

Jenkins accurately notes that “by 2025, Africans and Latin Americans combined will make up about 60 percent of Catholics” (2002a:195), but it is the Latin Americans who make up the bulk (73%) of that combination. Figures 1A and 1B show the trends for Catholics and Protestants respectively. These figures compare, for Protestants and Catholics, the proportion of adherents by continent in 1900, 2000 and projected for 2050. Today, 43% of all Catholics are Latin American. By 2025 Africa will have added 108 million Catholics, almost doubling its Catholic population—but Latin American Catholics will have increased by 145 million, to almost 45% of world Catholics. If we include the populations outside of Latin America that are also generally defined as ethnically Hispanic—those of Spain, Portugal and Latino immigrants in North America—by 2025 or shortly thereafter a full half of the world’s Catholics will be Latino. This milestone will be short-lived, slowly eroded by the burgeoning population of Asia, but the difference in Catholic and Protestant demographic trajectories will persist in broad terms: by

2050, about half (47%) of the world's Catholics will be Latino, but about half (51%) of the world's Protestants, including Anglicans, will be African.

Some question this claim of Catholic vitality in Latin America due to the dramatic growth of Protestant groups observed there in recent years. However, while a great deal of scholarly attention has been (justifiably) focused on the growth of Protestant evangelical and Pentecostal groups in Latin America, the numerical effect of these inroads on the growth of the Catholic population of the continent has been and will continue to be quite small. There are three reasons for this. First, while these non-Catholic groups are growing rapidly in percentage terms, the denominator for the percentages is many times smaller than the Catholic population. In raw numbers the relative growth is much smaller than it appears as a percentage. Second, at the same time, the Latin American population as a whole is growing rapidly. Third, the growth of non-Catholic groups in Latin America has already slowed dramatically from just a decade ago, and will continue to decline through the next several decades. The resultant of these contrasting trends is that, while the Catholic proportion of the population will decline by single digits, the size of the Catholic population will grow by double digits. Brazil, the typical and largest case, offers a good example. The Catholic proportion of the Brazilian population is projected to decline by 6% (from 86% to 80%) between 2000 and 2050. But during the same period the number of Catholics in Brazil will increase by 35%, from 147 million in 2000 to 198 million in 2050, because the total population of Brazil will increase by almost half. The proportional decline of Catholics in Brazil, moreover, is petering out. See Figure 2. After dropping by 4% during the 1990s, it is now projected to take until 2025 to decline another 4%, and then will decrease by only 2% between 2025 and 2050. The rate of decline today, then, is less than half what it was during the 1990s, and will halve again in another 20 years.

For Protestants the South may be evangelizing the North, but for U.S. Catholics the South is moving North, as the American Catholic Church is becoming home to increasing millions of Latino immigrants. Today about two-thirds of Hispanic immigrants report Catholic affiliation (ARIS: Kosmin et al. 2001),² a proportion that, despite much-publicized Protestant defections, has remained stable for over 20 years. The U.S. Census projects that in the next 45 years the U.S. Hispanic population will triple, to over 100 million persons. Barring a dramatic change in Hispanic religious practices, then, the number of Hispanic Catholics in the United States can be projected to grow to about 66 million persons. Thus by 2050 there will be more Hispanic Catholics in the United States than there are total Catholics today.

For Protestants the rise of a new African center is accompanied by a decline of the old Euro-American dominance, but this is not the case for Catholics. The proportion of Protestants in both Europe and North America has declined by about half since 1900, and will continue to decline in the future. This is true for Catholics in Europe, but not North America. The proportion of Catholics in North America has never been large, and will only change slightly in the future. Today only 7% of the world's Catholics are in North America, a proportion that has been, and will continue to be, relatively stable since 1900.

The overall population shifts, however, can be somewhat misleading when talking about the cultural or religious "center" of the Christian world. This is because a large part of these population shifts is due, not to religious growth or decline, but to an overall shift in world population. In 1900 25% of the population of the planet was European, and only 7% was in Africa. By 2050, those proportions will be largely reversed: Europe will comprise only 6% of world population, and Africa almost 22%. The growth of Christians in Africa, therefore, is a result of both the Christianization of Africa and the growth of African population. Likewise, the

numerical drop in the proportion of Christians in Europe is a result of both de-Christianization, that is, a shrinking proportion of Christians in Europe, and a relative decline in the European population.

Figure 3A and 3B decompose these combined trends to show the respective relative concentrations of Catholics and Protestants net of overall shifts in population. The statistic reported is the ratio of the proportion of Catholics or Protestants to the overall proportion of world population for each continent. This can best be thought of as an index of concentration for each group. If all group members (Catholics in Figure 3A, Protestants in Figure 3B) were distributed equally in the world population, all areas would have a value of 1.0 for this index. In Figure 3A, for example, values greater than one indicate that the concentration of Catholics is greater than that of overall population in that area, and can be interpreted to the effect that that area is more pervasively Catholic than the norm. A value less than one, on the other hand, indicates that Catholics are more sparse in that area than in the world as a whole. Figure 3B shows the corresponding indices for Protestants. These figures show, then, the concentration of Catholics and Protestants that can be attributed to cultural dominance or continued evangelization rather than simply to population growth.

These figures show clearly that, while there will be some dramatic shifts in the Protestant center, changes in the relative concentration of Catholics in the near-term future will be modest. Within this overall picture, they bring three trends into sharp focus. First, they show clearly that the growth of Christian concentration due to evangelization in the global south—Africa, Asia and Latin America--has already occurred. The increased concentration in these areas in the next 50 years will be due entirely to population growth, not to any particular affinity of Christianity to the culture of these continents nor (as I discuss further below) to any general global advance of

Christianity relative to other religions. In fact, the cultural concentration of Catholics in Latin America and of Protestants in Africa will decrease slightly over the next 5 decades. (The concentration of Anglicans in Africa will drop the most, from 4.0 today to 3.6 in 2050.) Second, Latin America is now and will continue to be several times more dominant for Catholics than is Africa, or than either Latin America or Africa are for Protestants. Catholics will remain about 5 times more concentrated in Latin America than they are worldwide, including Africa and North America, which are both just at the world average. Both Catholics and Protestants will remain marginal in Asia. Third, the changing center of Protestantism will be due entirely to decline in the first world, not cultural increase in the third world, as their relative dominance in Europe and North America continues to plummet. (By contrast, the Catholic concentration in North America will remain virtually unchanged, and is projected to increase slightly in Europe.) Despite this decline, by 2050 Protestants will still be slightly more concentrated in North America than they are in either Africa or Latin America.

The predominance of Latin America in the global Catholic population is actually nothing new. Although Latinos are still growing in their numerical dominance in the Church, Latin American culture was already more pervasively Catholic than Europe a hundred years ago. Catholics have consistently been about five times as concentrated in Latin America as that area is in the world population—about double the concentration of Europe.

Liberal North vs. Conservative South?

How will these shifts affect religious practice and global society? For Jenkins, “the most significant point [regarding the implications of demographic changes in Christian populations] is that in terms of both theology and moral teaching, Southern Christianity is more conservative than the Northern—especially the American—version (2002b:56).” Compared with the

democratized, secularized faith of European and American Christians, the churches of the global South are “stalwartly traditional or even reactionary” in their literal adoption of the ancient world view of the New Testament.

However, just as Catholic demographic changes do not neatly align with a global North to South shift, so the simple identification of liberalism (or dissent) with the North and conservatism (or orthodoxy) with the South does not easily fit the Catholic reality. A good case could be made that the opposite is more accurate. On issues of sexuality, for example, the liberal dissent of the North over contraception or even gay marriage is relatively mild compared to the bitter debate in Africa over polygamy, which requires the ongoing restructuring of families who become Catholic (Gbonigi 2002, Chama 2004) and contravenes international ideals of women’s rights (Olaka-Onyango 2002). Jenkins points out that there are now more Jesuits in India than in the United States, but fails to note that, in both the United States and India, the Jesuits are among the most liberal of Catholics. In 1998 the writings of the Indian Jesuit Anthony De Mello were proscribed by the Church as heretical, an assimilation to Buddhist teachings, in probably the most theologically serious such action of recent decades (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 1998). Latin America has given rise to some of the most progressive, functionally Marxist theology and ecclesial movements in this or any age of the Church; and its theologians and bishops have been duly and repeatedly rebuked by the Holy See.³ Priests in Europe or North America may question the rule of celibacy, but at least a third (by conservative estimates) of rural priests in Latin America live in thinly hidden concubinage.

Despite the pretensions of some in the liberal Catholic media, which Jenkins (2002a:194-198) adopts at face value, the United States and Europe, not the global South, are the source of some of the most conservative movements in the Catholic Church (Weaver and Appleby 1995).

In the past decade a half-dozen new Catholic colleges, among the most explicitly orthodox, even reactionary, in the world, have been founded—in the United States (Bollag 2004). Numerous indications suggest that younger Americans, including Catholics, are growing more religious. The massive annual youth survey Monitoring the Future reports that the percentage of eighth graders who report that religion plays a very important role in their lives increased by 8% during the 1990s.⁴ A 1999 study by pollster George Barna found that Americans under age 35 are more likely than their parents to attend church, read the Bible and pray (Winner 2000). A Gallup poll on *The Spiritual Life of Young Americans* in the same year found that almost 90% of teenagers, including Catholics, said they believed in the divinity of Jesus (Gallup and Lindsay 1999). The 2002 General Social Survey (Davis et al.) reports that a higher proportion of Catholics under 30 than those over 45 reported that they believed the Bible to be the “actual Word of God, to be taken literally, word for word” (23% vs. 16%), and that they had “a great deal” of confidence in organized religion (29% vs. 24%). In a study of young adult Catholics, Hoge et al. (1998) reported that the faith of young Catholics was centered in three core elements which are all traditional, orthodox components of the faith: Marian devotion, God’s presence in the sacraments, and concern for the poor. These trends are suggestive, but still too new and too weak to be compelling. Carroll (2002), in a book subtitled “Why Young Adults are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy”, argues that young adult traditionalists, while numerically small, have a disproportionately powerful cultural influence in reshaping American Christianity, including Catholicism. Whether this turns out to be the case remains to be seen.

While the evidence is not yet conclusive for Catholic laity, among priests the trend is clear: younger, newly ordained priests today in the Catholic West are far more traditional than the preceding generation. Periodic surveys of American priests going back to 1970 have shown

that newer ordinands have been growing more conservative since the early 1980s, to the point that the most recently-ordained priests today express levels of belief and devotion that are comparable to priests ordained during the 1950s, when traditionalism was at its height. Hoge and Wenger's recent (2003) interviews with priests found that, in contrast to priests ordained in past decades, today's new ordinands express a less reformist and more traditional view of the Church and the priesthood, centered in personal piety and in touch with the ancient roots of Catholic life, and yearn for a restoration of traditional elements in the liturgy. A spate of surveys of Catholic priests during 2002 (commissioned by media organizations for background on the sexual abuse scandal) has provided a wealth of documentation on the growth of traditional, orthodox beliefs among younger clergy. In a July 2002 survey by the *Los Angeles Times*, 72% of Catholic priests agreed that "younger clergy in America are more theologically conservative—that is, more religiously orthodox—than their older counterparts", and 76% believed that "younger priests today are more theologically conservative than they were in the 1970s or 1980s". The *Los Angeles Times* (Watanabe, October 21, 2002: A1) summarized its findings:

Clerics under age 41 expressed more allegiance to the clerical hierarchy, less dissent against traditional church teachings, and more certainty about the sinfulness of homosexuality, abortion, artificial birth control, and other moral issues than did their elders, the poll found. Those attitudes place the younger priests at odds with many priests who were shaped by the liberal reforms of the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s and who tend to support further changes in the church—including women priests, optional celibacy, more lay empowerment, and the direct election of bishops.

These shifts in attitudes are confirmed by recruitment trends. U. S. dioceses whose bishops are outspokenly orthodox have seen an influx of priestly aspirants, as have several relatively new orders of priests that emphasize fidelity rather than reform. Fifteen percent of current seminarians in the United States are members of just one of these orders, the Legionaries of Christ.⁵ Conservatism is also clearly on the rise among Catholic nuns and monks in the West.

In the last 20 years a new group of Catholic religious orders that have emphasized orthodox fidelity and have reinstated the traditional disciplines of communal living and prayer and wearing distinctive garb, have attracted thousands of young new postulants in Europe and North America, while orders that discontinued such practices in the 1960s in favor a liberal theology of social justice have seen scant new vocations. This evidence directly contradicts Jenkins' claim (2002a:198) that "much of the liberal dissidence within Catholicism stems not from the laity but from clergy themselves . . . [who] are much more likely to be located in the North than the South".

In sum, it appears that the reports of the demise of traditional Catholicism in the West, and its rise in the South, have been greatly exaggerated. Anglican scholar Ian Douglas, pointing out that some of the Southern Anglican bishops are quite liberal, argues that this is also the case for Protestantism: "to say that there is a normative Third World Christianity that speaks with a unified conservative voice committed to chastising the errant West over issues of human sexuality does not give full credit to the many diverse voices in this new Christianity." For global Catholicism, it is clear a fortiori that the distribution of orthodox and progressive elements is far more complex and diverse than the picture of a liberal North versus a conservative South would suggest.

From National to Global

Jenkins' claims for the political implications of the shifts in global Christianity are nothing less than sweeping. In his view, they portend a fundamental change in church-state relations, that will alter the balance of political, religious and social forces that has been in place since the 16th century: "We are at a moment as epochal as the Reformation itself—a Reformation moment not only for Catholics but for the entire Christian world (2002b: 53)."

Actually, he argues, the Counter-Reformation is a better referent for today's changes, because what is occurring is the re-emergence of a religious dominance over the authority and legitimacy of political structures that is comparable to that which obtained in medieval Christendom. Resurgent global Christianity, corresponding to a decline of national identities, is leading to a rejection of Enlightenment secularity in political affairs in favor of "a new transnational order in which political, social, and personal identities are defined chiefly by religious loyalties (2002b:53)."

It is, of course, widely recognized that nationalism has receded during the latter part of the 20th century, and that the forces of globalization, post-modernity and multinational capitalism, among others, pose ongoing challenges today to the legitimacy and autonomy of nation-states. It is not at all clear, however, that these challenges will ultimately result in an erosion of national identity, nor that religion will contribute to such erosion. Jenkins' depiction of resurgent religious salience in world affairs follows in many respects that of Samuel Huntington, who has famously argued that the coming fault lines in world affairs will be cultural, that is, dominated by ethnic and religious concerns. Yet Huntington does not propose that the rise of civilisational conflict entails the decline of nations. On the contrary, he predicts: "Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilisations (1993:22)."

Mark Juergensmeyer presents a similar alternative to Jenkins' vision of a reconstituted Christendom. He, with Jenkins, recognizes the corrosive effect of globalization on the Enlightenment notion of the state. He also details the worldwide resurgence of traditional religion, not only in Christianity but among all major religions. However, he argues that traditional religion, as well as ethnicity and cultural traditions, has provided a new lease on life

for outworn secular national identities. Far from further delegitimizing the nation-state, in other words, Juergensmeyer maintains that “traditional forms of social identity [religion and ethnicity] have helped to rescue one of modernity’s central themes: the idea of nationhood.” Like Jenkins, Juergensmeyer notes that today’s resurgent ethno-religious movements are, to Western eyes, conservative, intolerant, and repressive regarding traditional social norms. However, although they “have reached back into history for ancient images and concepts that will give them credibility, theirs are not simply efforts to resuscitate old ideas from the past. These are contemporary ideologies that meet present-day social and political needs.” Like Jenkins, Juergensmeyer concludes that “religious visions of moral order will continue to appear as attractive. . . solutions to the problems of authority, identity, and belonging in a globalized world.” Instead of reconstituting a premodern past that leaves nations behind, however, he notes that such religious visions have become carriers of renewed national identities.

Although the rise of religious nationalism has been noted among Muslim nations, it is too early to tell whether this will also be the case in the resurgent Christian South. Such an outcome, however, would be neither implausible nor unprecedented. In the United States, a generically Christian civil religion, that affirms the moral legitimacy and goodness of the American nation, has long provided a religious penumbra for national ideals. Proper submission to political authority, moreover, is an explicit feature of traditional biblical Christian belief.

There is, however, a more serious problem with Jenkins’ thesis that resurgent Christianity will undermine national identities. Jenkins counters Huntington’s claim that “In the long run. . . Muhammed wins out” (1996:65) with the argument that Christianity will develop a “massive lead” over Islam (2002a:6). In fact, however, according to current projections, neither will be the case. Although the shift in the Christian population has prompted a certain triumphalism

regarding the growing global South, and corresponding despair or criticism regarding the declining global North, the net effect of such shifts on the worldwide Christian population, for both Protestants and Catholics, has been zero. Figure 4 presents this context, reporting the proportion of the population that is Christian for the world and its major continents from 1900 to 2050, according to the same WCD and UN projections used by Jenkins. In 1900, 34.6 percent of the world's population was Christian. By 2000, after a century that saw the vigorous expansion of Christian missions, that proportion had declined slightly, to 33.0 percent. By 2050, it is projected to again grow slightly, to 34.2 percent—still below what it was 150 years earlier. This small variation, moreover, is well within the range of uncertainty of measurement and projection in these data. Thus, despite large realignments of the Christian population by continent, there is no trend toward growing Christian dominance in the world. Generally speaking, the Christian share appears to be stable at about a third of world population.

Moreover, with only minor exceptions, Christianity is presently growing only in those parts of the world where the population is growing. (Furthermore, those nations affected by growing Christianity will also be affected by rapid overall population growth, which is likely to induce its own unique stresses on political structures, independent of religious identities.) Whatever effect a growing Christianity has on national structures, it is not, empirically, a global phenomenon. It will not, therefore, be an effect on the nation as such, that is, on the idea of a nation, or on the general legitimacy of the nation as form of political association, but only on such minority of particular nations as are affected by the locally resurgent, traditional Christianity. If this effect is to be conceived as something like Christendom, it is, at minimum, an odd form of local, selective Christendom.

Although it is not possible to say for sure, it appears likely that the variety and growth of traditional religions, including Christianity, rather than reasserting a premodern religious order that dominates nations, will recast church-state relations in a multiplicity of forms that are only selectively modern. This situation would be better described not as a new Christendom but as a further loss of Christendom—prospectively, a movement beyond Christendom—altogether.

Protestant Particularity vs. Catholic Centrality

On this point again, however, the differences between Protestants and Catholics suggest different outcomes regarding the possibility of a renewed Christendom. In the focus on the political implications of religious population change, the implications for religious institutions are often given relatively short shrift (a reflection, no doubt, of our secularized culture). Jenkins reflects this general imbalance; in his book-length treatment of the topic, there is no chapter on the implications of global change for religious institutions themselves. Yet, while the global shifts in Christian population will surely affect political structures, they will likely to have a more direct effect on the institutional structures and arrangements of religion. These effects are not inconsequential for the notion of a new Christendom. In the analysis that follows, I argue that the demographic changes in Christianity will encourage opposing trends, toward greater decentralization in Protestantism, but greater centralization in Catholicism, with the result that a renewed sense of Christendom, as Jenkins conceives it, is more likely to occur for the latter than the former.

The reference for understanding the current changes in Christianity, as Jenkins notes, is the 16th-century Reformation, when Protestantism and the modern nation-state emerged together, and symbiotically. During this era, Protestant religions, I suggest, became identified with the nascent national entities, to the benefit of both, in a way that Catholicism did not. Luther's revolt

against Rome was famously abetted and made effective by the political support of local princes feeling their way toward a German national identity—to which Lutheranism in turn bestowed legitimacy. In a similar way the Church *in* England” (*ecclesia anglicana*) became the Church *of* England (*ecclesia anglicanae*) during the 16th century, so assimilated to national identity that the King, who was understood to rule by divine right, was in turn declared the head of the church, which by the 19th century was described as merely “the nation of England at prayer”. This congruence between national and religious identity or authority inhibited both the inherently fractive tendencies of the new Protestantism and the inherently cohesive inclinations in Catholicism. Within a generation after Luther, both England and Germany were preoccupied with limiting internal religious dissent, while the so-called Catholic nations addressed themselves to asserting greater independence from Rome.

Jenkins notes that by 1600 the Catholic Church had become the first institution to operate on a global scale (2002b: 55). Indeed, the Catholic Church had expanded to the perimeters of the known world a thousand years earlier; for 16th-century Catholicism, it was the nation, not the church, that was an innovation. The development of Catholicism’s institutional structures—the same structures that persist to this day—predate the development of the nation-state, with the effect that the Catholic Church remains the only truly global Christian institution. Unlike all Protestant denominations (and, arguably, any other modern institution), the center of the Catholic Church today is not in any nation. Although its ruling structures are in Italy, it is not in any constitutive sense the Italian Catholic Church. The offices of the Pope, in fact, technically form a separate nation to itself (Vatican City), a sign of the Church’s independence from all nations. To underscore this unique independence, Vatican City is the only universally recognized national entity that is not a member of the United Nations.

These structural differences suggest different institutional outcomes for Protestant and Catholic groups as nations change today. In the face of the current and predicted decline of national autonomy, Protestant church order, aligned with political entities, would tend to lead either to localized certainty (in its more conservative forms) or to collegial relativism (in its more liberal forms). The Catholic Church, on the other hand, as a kind of multinational religious corporation, would be led by the same forces to constrain local (that is, national) variation in the service of global coherence. On this reasoning, if the projected decline in the strength of nation-states occurs, it will lead Protestant denominations to fracture further while inducing the Catholic Church to become more centralized. Increasingly deprived (or free) of national support, Protestantism's strength for the future will lie in its increasing adaptation to a diverse array of particular communities; Catholicism's strength will lie in the further concentration of authority in a single person, with care for every member of the faithful on the entire planet. This is, of course, a broad simplification, and there are many qualifications and exceptions. Yet the most distinct institutional trends observed in these religions today strongly bear out this analysis. These trends are the rise of postdenominationalism among Protestants and, for Catholics, the increasing centralization of church authority in the Pope.

Barrett and Johnson chronicle the further splintering of Protestantism. In a further consideration of the data, these authors of the *World Christian Encyclopedia* make the case that the newest, rapidly emerging "global megabloc" of alignments in Christianity is a phenomenon they term "postdenominationalism" (2001:24):

Contemporary postdenominationalism is a movement sweeping throughout the churches worldwide. It is a vast, scattered movement of many distinct and separate protests, revolts, schisms, secessions, rebellions, independencies, reformations, and renewals. Today it includes over 20,000 movements, networks, or new denominations with 394 million church members. . . . Basically it stands for a rejection of historic denominationalism. . . . At origin these new groups unilaterally adopt a markedly different

church lifestyle from that of their parent bodies, rejecting the authority of existing parent denominations and many established aspects of denominationalist faith and life, and putting in their place new authority, new structures, new names, new beliefs, new solutions, and new forms of church life. . . .These churches are among the fastest-growing in the world. By A.D. 2025 the independents, who numbered less than half the size of Protestants in 1970, will have nearly 115 million more members than Protestants.

The “parent bodies” involved here, of course, are overwhelmingly the established Reformation and post-Reformation Protestant denominations. In this sense the rise of postdenominationalism is but a further extension of the fissiparous tendency of Protestantism.

At the same time, the Catholic Church has not only resisted splintering but has even become much more centralized. Two relatively recent factors in the Church’s life have prepared it for this result: the recognition of the development of doctrine, and the establishment of papal infallibility. Strikingly, both of these are less than 150 years old. They are “post-modern” developments, in the strict sense that they emerged subsequent to the birth of modernity. Together, they have uniquely positioned the Catholic Church and faith to engage the twin forces of globalization and postmodernity, by allowing a balance of continuity and change, variation within limits. With respect to global demographic change, in recent times the emphasis in the Catholic Church has clearly been on continuity and limits, by regularizing the rapidly diversifying global Church under the unifying central authority of the Pope.

The Catholic Church today is rapidly centralizing and regularizing every aspect of Church life. Ironically, while progressive Catholics received the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s as a manifesto for local autonomy, a good case can be made that the net effect of the council has been as much to direct and regulate as to promote and legitimate local variation in the Church. As a matter of simple fact, in the period following the council, assertions of centralized regulation have occurred at a pace seldom if ever before matched in the history of the

Church. In the last forty years the Catholic Church has issued (a) new or updated universal: lectionary, code of canon law, catechism (the first in 400 years), general instruction for the liturgy, general directory for catechesis, and norms for Catholic universities and schools, to mention only the most significant. During the same period the Pope has issued more universal teaching documents, not just slightly more but several times as many, than at any previous time in the history of the Church. By some measures, more doctrine and discipline has been promulgated from Rome during the last 40 years than in all the previous ages of the Church combined.

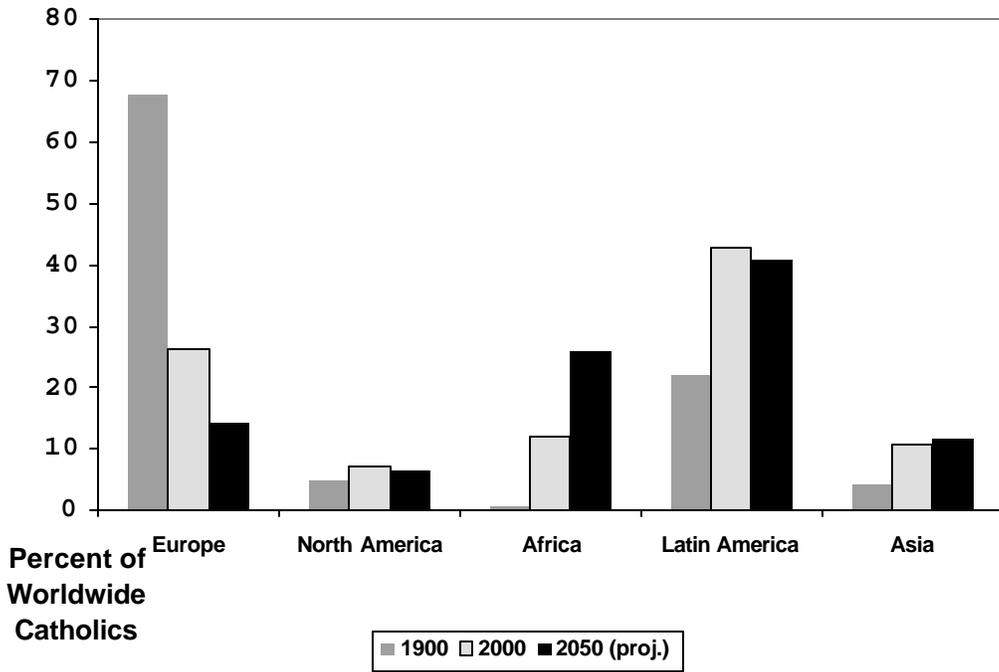
It is difficult to be sure, but the likelihood is that such centralization will continue for the foreseeable future. It is common today to think of the Catholic Church as having always been a steeply hierarchical institution, but the level of centralization and worldwide integration of authority that exists in the Church today is, in historical terms, a fairly recent development. Through most of the Church's history the type of pre-eminent authority the Pope exercises today has been challenged by the centrifugal forces of conciliarism (rule by church councils) and gallicanism (rule by national assemblies of bishops). Eight hundred years ago conciliarism was at its height; during most of the twelfth century there were two rival popes supported by competing councils. Gallicanism was in ascendancy just two centuries ago, when the prerogatives of the Pope were severely circumscribed following the French revolution. The doctrine popularly known as papal infallibility specifically establishes that the Pope's interpretation of doctrine cannot be over-ridden by a council or national assembly, and was only declared in 1870. In historical terms, we may well be at only the beginning of a period of growing centralization in the Catholic Church.

III. Conclusion

The thesis that the global realignment of Christian populations will lead to a renewed Christendom in the emerging South is qualified, specified and in part contradicted by a consideration of the differences between Protestant and Catholics in the projected population shifts. Over the next 50 years, as their centers of population are flung from their common origins in Europe, Protestants and Catholics will find divergent new centers of concentration in Africa and South America respectively. Protestants, more closely allied to nations to begin with, will experience a greater decline of dominance in the North; and the liberal/orthodox (or progressive/traditional) doctrinal responses to modernity will, for Catholics, be much less aligned with a global North/South tension. With the decline of the European style nation-state, religious authority has been and will become more dispersed in Protestantism and more concentrated in Catholicism.

The net effect of these changes, I have argued, will be more than just a transfer of venue of Christian dominance from North to South. Christianity is, in fact, not experiencing net global growth, nor increasing population share in non-Christian regions. Protestant regions are experiencing a fragmentation, not concentration, of church authority. The set of these realignments, I argue, should not be generalized as a “new Christendom”. Rather, church-state relations around the globe are more likely to reflect new, more complex, articulations of civil and religious realities that will move beyond the old arrangement of Christendom altogether. Whether this turns out to be the case remains to be seen; as with all projections, any assertions regarding them are limited by the contingency of the trends estimated. The further implications of these shifts for national and religious life and culture will likely occupy religious scholars for some years to come.

Figure 1A
Global Shifts in Catholic Population
1900-2050



Source: WCD 2003

Figure 1B
Global Shifts in Protestant Population
1900-2050

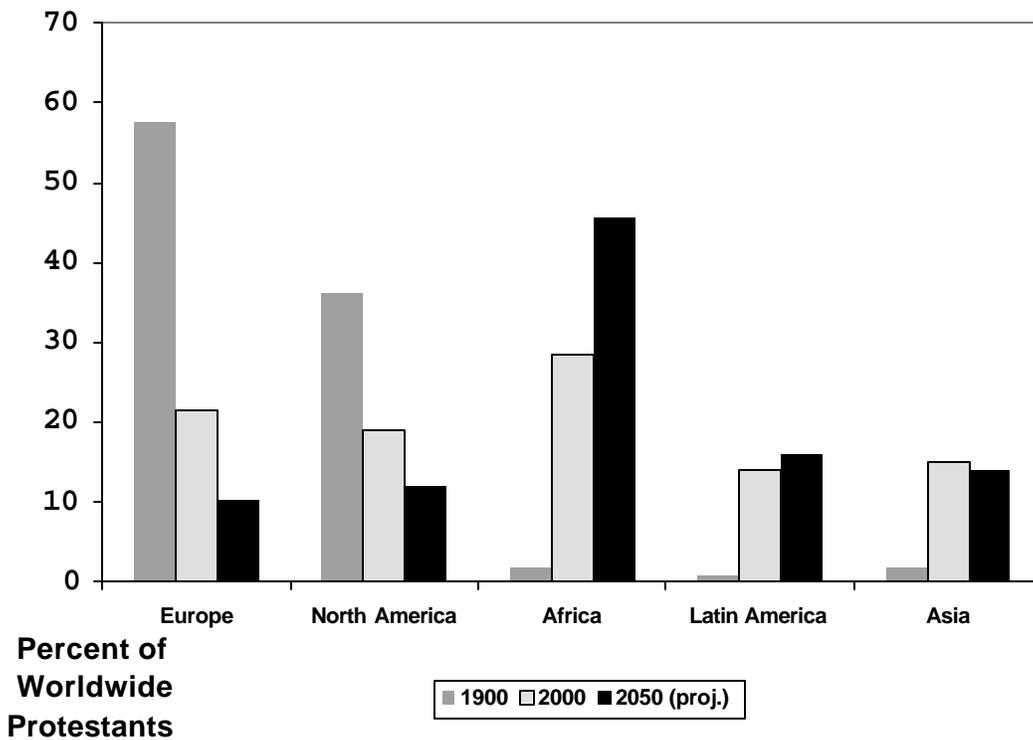


Figure 2
Current and Projected Decadal Rate of Decline of Catholics
in Brazil 1990-2050: WCD 2003

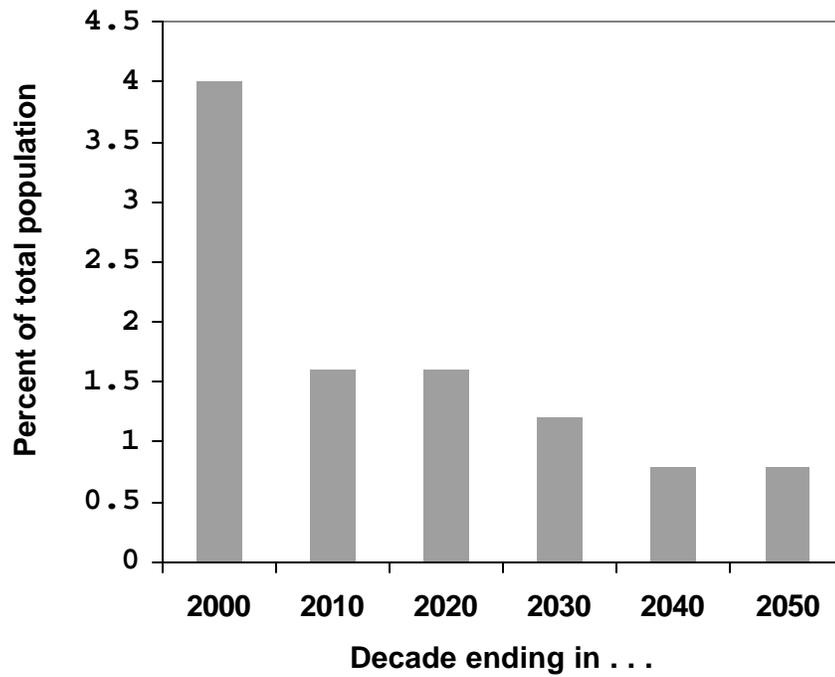
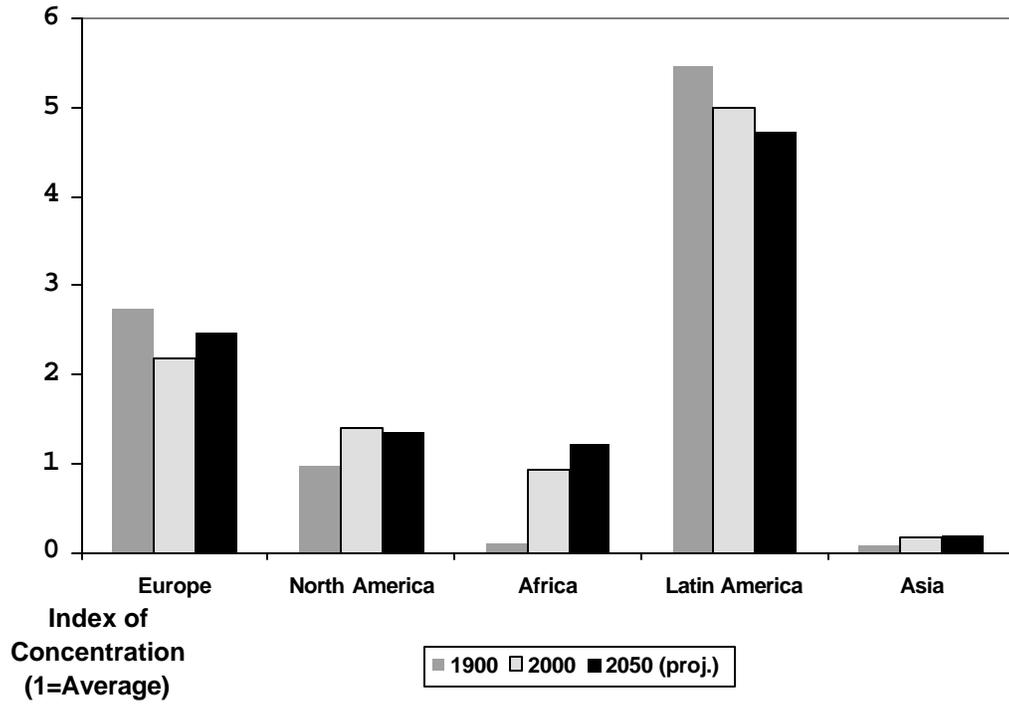
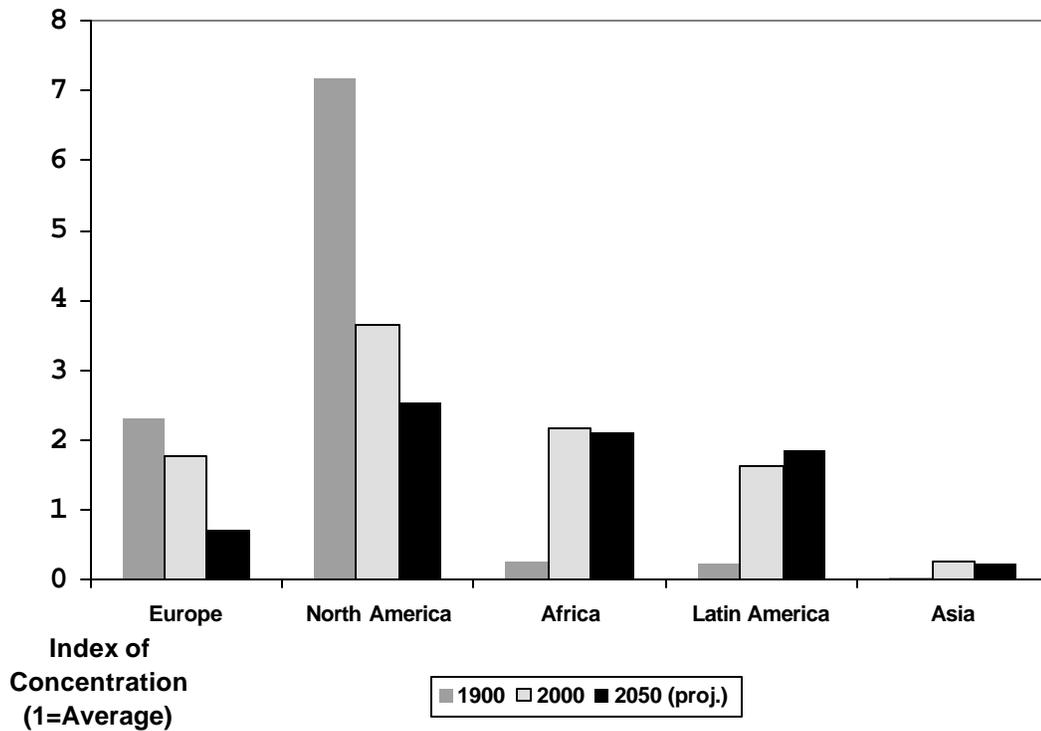


Figure 3A
Global Cultural Concentration of Catholics
1900-2050



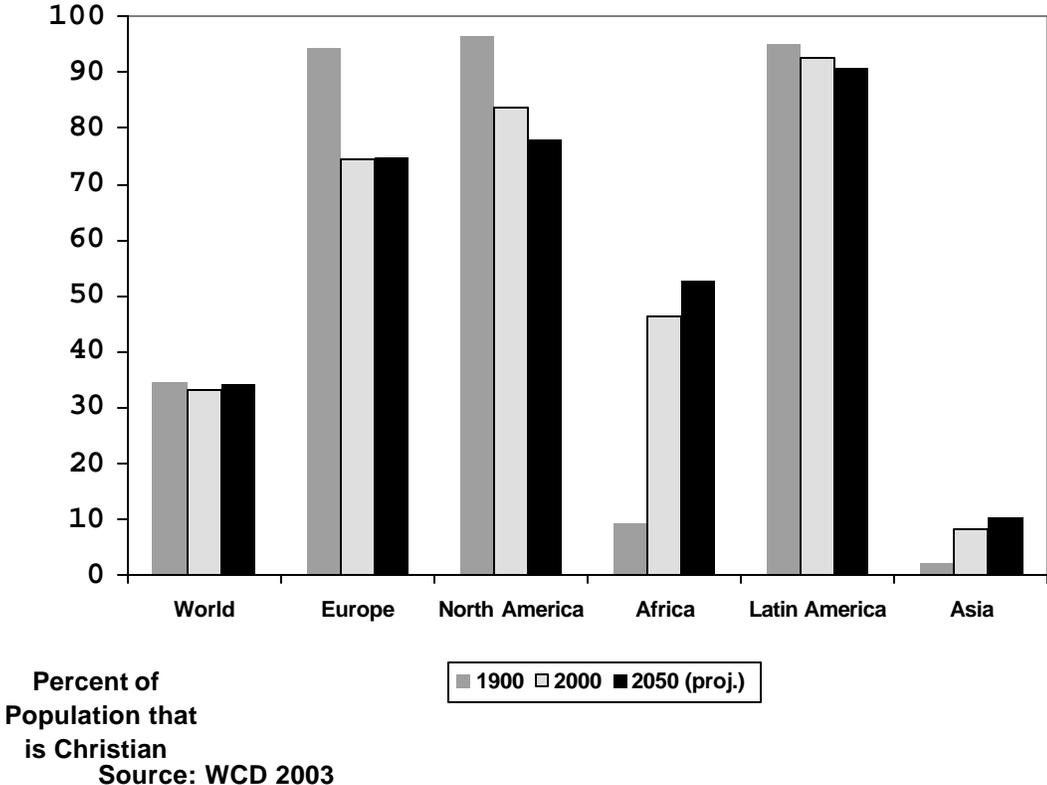
Source: WCD 2003

Figure 3B
Global Cultural Concentration of Protestants
1900-2050



Source: WCD 2003

Figure 4
Population Proportion of Christians by Continent
1900-2050: WCD 2003



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NOTES

¹ I wish to thank the Center for Christian Studies at the University of Virginia for the speaking invitation that prompted this study, and Dean Hoge, Philip Jenkins, Rhys Williams, James Youniss and anonymous reviewers for helpful comments on earlier drafts.

² On the ARIS 2001 survey, twenty-nine percent of surveyed Catholics identified as Hispanic—a proportion acknowledged to be low, since the survey was only administered in English. This computes to about 20 million of the 65 million U.S. Catholics, or about two-thirds of the 35 million U.S. Hispanics.

³ Jenkins claims (2002a:198), “Liberal criticism derives especially from only selected regions of the world—and moreover, the very regions in which Catholic numbers are stagnant, or worse [i.e., the global North].” He (2002a: 145-147) duly chronicles the radical Marxist tendency of Latin American Catholicism as evidence of the Church’s political participation in Latin America, but misinterprets the imposition of orthodox bishops by Rome as an indigenous rightward turn, and fails to see the implications of this obvious counter-example for his overall thesis. With similar confusion, he argues in one place (2002a:144) that Brazilian Catholicism instantiates increasing nationalism in the global South, and in another that it is questionable whether Brazil will even remain “a major Catholic state” (2002a:92).

⁴ As reported by Child Trends, an independent youth research organization, January 2002.

⁵ The Legionaries of Christ report “almost 700” in formation to become priests, out of a population of seminarians reported (Kenedy 2000; includes both diocesan and religious) of 4,826.