




# Ghana to Become a Majority Muslim Nation by 2096: A Critical Examination of Ghana's 2000, 2010, 2021 Censuses and its Implications for Christian Missions

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## ABSTRACT

This study analysed Ghana's demographic patterns as shown by the 2000, 2010, and 2021 censuses and considered how these trends may affect Christian missions. According to the analysis, Ghana's Muslim population has been steadily increasing over time, and by the year 2096, it may have a Muslim majority. Christian mission organisations working in Ghana must reevaluate their methods and approaches in order to effectively interact with and minister to a shifting religious landscape as a result of this probable demographic upheaval. The study also investigated the probable effects of a Muslim majority in Ghana and discussed the consequences for Christian missionary work, emphasising the need for cultural sensitivity, interfaith communication, and contextualised approaches to engage with the diverse religious beliefs and practices of Ghanaians. This study further examined what this demographic trend suggests and its implication for evangelism and intentional Christlike disciple making if a reversal is to be envisaged. The thesis statement of the paper is that Islam in Ghana unlike Christianity is witnessing steady growth, and the Church is enjoined by her calling to make Christlike disciples for her future survival. This article belongs to the field of missiology. It employed a transdisciplinary approach that incorporated statistical hermeneutics, hermeneutics of comparative theology, history of religion and demography to interpret quantitative results and determine their place and meaning in the religious landscape and their implications for Christian Mission.

**Keywords:** *Christian mission, Islamic growth, population census, Disciple-Making.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In trying to understand the religious balance in any space, it is good to appreciate the role numbers play. Islam and Christianity in Africa in the twentieth century have witnessed tremendous growth and are continuing to grow apace.<sup>1</sup> The last three censuses in Ghana (2000,2010,2021), reveal a positive growth tilt in favour of Islam. Projecting these figures in the future suggests that if nothing is done, Christianity in Ghana will become the minority faith by the year 2096. Since this has implications for a minority faith in a future Islamized society, it calls for urgent steps to envision a possible reversal of this trend. This potential shift carries significant implications for Christian mission organizations operating in Ghana, requiring a thoughtful reassessment of their strategies and approaches.

<sup>1</sup> Phillip Jenkins, *The next Christendom: The coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 191.

This paper seeks to investigate Ghana's demographic patterns and any potential effects on Christian missions. One can better comprehend the country's shifting religious demographics by examining data from the censuses taken in 2000, 2010, and 2021. The emphasis is on the growth rates of the Muslim and Christian populations as well as the effects of a Ghana with a projected Muslim majority on Christian missionary work.

Christian mission organisations must address significant issues raised by the prospective shift to a country with a Muslim majority. How might this change impact Ghanaian Christian missions' outreach programmes? What are the effects on discipleship, evangelism, and the overall Christian presence in the nation? In order to effectively connect with Ghanaians' different religious beliefs and practises, it is important to take into account aspects like cultural sensitivity, interfaith dialogue, and contextualised approaches.

The paper aims to offer insight into the likely future religious landscape of Ghana and its consequences for Christian missions by looking at the demographic censuses and estimating the growth rates. The findings are intended to educate Christian mission organisations and individuals working in Ghana on the significance of adapting methods and strategies to successfully navigate the shifting dynamics of religion.

The approach for this paper is transdisciplinary in nature. Transdisciplinary theologians and researchers step outside the boundaries of their own fields to discuss matters that are common to their respective disciplines. They then return to their original field of study with a richer understanding of the topics that were discussed.<sup>2</sup> Given that Ghana, a religiously diverse country has witnessed a noteworthy demographic change over the past decades which potentially shifts toward a Muslim majority, may have implications for the Christian mission. A sincere examination of the present state of the Church in Ghana and the re-appropriation of the right missional tools and zeal have proven that the *force majeure* can put a stop to the future Islamisation of the nation. The article begins with an overview of Christianity and Islam, and continues with an analysis of the population censuses of 2000, 2010 and 2021, followed by a description of its projection in the future and a description of the strategies to be adopted if a reversal of the trend is expected.

### **Christianity and Islam - The Changing National Religious Landscape**

The beginning of Christianity in West Africa can be traced to Elmina in the Gold Coast where according to historical records the first Christian mass was held on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> January 1482<sup>3</sup> by some Portuguese explorers. At first, there was no serious effort to evangelize but to do business with the indigenous people. The first people to get “converted” were kings and their acolytes who did so for political and economic reasons.<sup>4</sup> Christianity has witnessed considerable growth since its advent in Ghana. Today Christianity from a historical minority religion is the most dominant in the religious landscape in Ghana. The 2021 national population and housing census revealed that 71.3 percent of Ghanaians profess Christianity as their religion.

The advent of Islam in Ghana, on the other hand, dates back to the 10th century during a period of trade and exchanges with the Berbers of North Africa who had adopted Sunni Islam. The introduction of Islam to Ghana was influenced by these Arab traders who traveled across the Sahara and established trade networks with indigenous communities. Through these interactions, Islamic teachings and practices gradually permeated Ghanaian society.<sup>5</sup> Today Islam is the second most dominant religion in Ghana as 19.9 percent of the Ghanaian population identify themselves as Muslims per the 2021 national population and housing census.

Demographic analysis of the 2000, 2010 and 2021 national population and housing censuses suggest that these two largest religions in Ghana are growing at very different rates. While it can be agreed that Christianity is the most dominant religion in terms of numbers, Islam is the fastest growing religion per the 2000, 2010 and 2021 censuses.

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<sup>2</sup> Gys M. Loubser, *Being Transdisciplinary Theologians in and Beyond Apocalyptic Environments*, HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies 72(4), a3473 (2016):2, accessed July 12, 2023, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i4.3473>

<sup>3</sup> Under the old Julian calendar it was a Sunday.

<sup>4</sup> J.Kofi Agbeti, *West Africa Church History: Christian Missions and Church Foundation 1482-1919* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986), 21.

<sup>5</sup> Ira M. Lapidus, *A history of Islamic societies*, (2009), TPB, OCLC 939580144, accessed July 12, 2023, <https://www.worldcat.org/fr/title/939580144>

**Table 1: Percentage of Christians, Muslims and Adherents of other Religions in Ghana**

<b>Religion</b>	<b>2000 census</b>	<b>2010 census<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>2021 census<sup>7</sup></b>
Christians	68.8%	71.2 %	71.3%
Muslims	15.9%	17.6%	19.9%
Other religions	15.3%	11.2%	8.8%

Table 1. Sources: Ghana Statistical Service 2000,2010, 2021 censuses, The World Fact Book

To better understand this data, there is a need to calculate the growth rates for each religion from the year 2000 to 2010, from the year 2010 to 2021 and from the year 2000 to 2021. To calculate the rate of growth for each religion, the following formula can be used: Rate of Growth = ((Final Value - Initial Value) / Initial Value) \* 100

1. So from 2000 to 2010:  
 Christian growth rate:  $(71.2\% - 68.8\%) / 68.8\% * 100 = 3.49\%$   
 Muslim growth rate:  $(17.6\% - 15.9\%) / 15.9\% * 100 = 10.69\%$   
 Other religions growth rate:  $(11.2\% - 15.3\%) / 15.3\% * 100 = -26.80\%$
2. From 2010 to 2021:  
 Christian growth rate:  $(71.3\% - 71.2\%) / 71.2\% * 100 = 0.14\%$   
 Muslim growth rate:  $(19.9\% - 17.6\%) / 17.6\% * 100 = 13.07\%$   
 Other religions growth rate:  $(8.8\% - 11.2\%) / 11.2\% * 100 = -21.43\%$
3. From 2000 to 2021:  
 Christian growth rate:  $(71.3\% - 68.8\%) / 68.8\% * 100 = 3.64\%$   
 Muslim growth rate:  $(19.9\% - 15.9\%) / 15.9\% * 100 = 25.16\%$   
 Other religions growth rate:  $(8.8\% - 15.3\%) / 15.3\% * 100 = -42.48\%$

### Understanding the Data

The statistical computations reveal the following:

- i. That between 2000 to 2010, Christianity grew by 3.48 %, while between 2010 to 2021 it began to witness a plateauing growth as it recorded a growth of 0.14%. This growth rate of 0.14% shows that Christianity did not grow between 2000 and 2010. The growth rate of 0.14% of Christianity for eleven consecutive years is almost nil.
- ii. That between 2000 to 2010 Islam grew by 10.69 %, while between 2010 to 2021 it recorded a growth of 13.06 %.
- iii. That other religions such as the traditional religion, the Rastafarian religion, Hinduism and Buddhism all witnessed a 26.79 % decline between 2000 to 2010, while between 2010 to 2021 witnessed another decline of 21.42 % in their total number of adherents.

In an analysis of the same data from the 2010 and 2021 censuses, George Gumah and James Amoah-Mensah observed that:

Christians haven't added as many figures as we ought over the past 10 years. With all the souls won by various churches and denominations in Ghana our representation in the total national population appreciated by only 0.1 % as against the population numbers in 2010 and 2021.<sup>8</sup>

For the purpose of the discourse in this paper, the researcher will focus on the data on the two major religions in Ghana, Christianity and Islam and the issues associated with the data and the implications for evangelism.

### Demographic Analysis

One instrument that missiologists use is demographic studies. With the above information, an attempt is made to reconstruct the growth of both Christianity and Islam each year from 2010 to 2021.

<sup>6</sup> The World fact book, Explore All Countries-Ghana, accessed July12, 2023 <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/ghana/>

<sup>7</sup> 2010 Population and Housing Census, National Analytical Report, accessed 16<sup>th</sup> November 2021, [https://statsghana.gov.gh/gssmain/fileUpload/pressrelease/2010\\_PHC\\_National\\_Analytical\\_Report.pdf](https://statsghana.gov.gh/gssmain/fileUpload/pressrelease/2010_PHC_National_Analytical_Report.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> George Gumah and James Amoah-Mensah, *Analysis of 2021 Census Data and Its Implications for The Ghanaian Church*, Ghana Evangelism Committee: 2023 Mid-Year Report Appendix B, 2023, 52.

**Table 2: Yearly Growth of Christianity and Islam from 2010 to 2021**

Year	% Christian	% Muslim
2010	71.2	17.6
2011	71.2	17.8
2012	71.2	18.0
2013	71.2	18.2
2014	71.2	18.4
2015	71.2	18.6
2016	71.2	18.8
2017	71.2	19.1
2018	71.2	19.3
2019	71.2	19.5
2020	71.3	19.7
2021	71.3	19.9

Reconstructing the growth for each religion on a yearly basis from 2010 to 2021 shows a stalled growth for Christianity and aggressive growth for Islam, taking into consideration that Christianity is not growing but is plateauing and growing at a rate of 0.14 %. As the growth rate is nearly zero it means it has stopped growing. When a population stops growing it starts to decline. This is known in science as logistic growth, meaning there is a depletion of a particular resource that makes a particular population growth rate slow and eventually drop.<sup>9</sup> A discussion will be done later in this paper on the resources that have been depleted in the Church in Ghana which is causing a decline in the population of Christians in the country.

**The Year Islam Would Become the Majority Religion in Ghana**

Since the growth of Christianity is plateauing and has almost stalled and the verge of a possible decline, there is a need to use a demographic projection<sup>10</sup> to find out the possible year that Islam will become the majority religion in Ghana. Using the growth rate of Islam of 13.07% over a period of eleven years that is from 2010 to 2021, taking into consideration all margins of errors, and projecting the same in the future is the following estimation:

**Table 3: Demographic Projection of Growth of Islam from 2010 to 2110**

Year	% Muslims
2010	17.6
2021	19.9
2031	23.2
2041	26.4
2051	29.7
2061	33.4
2071	37.6
2081	42.3
2091	47.6
2096	50.5
2100	53.0
2110	59.6

According to this demographic prediction of Islam's expansion in Ghana, Islam is expected to overtake Christianity as the country's dominant religion by the year 2096, barring any unavoidable circumstances.

<sup>9</sup> W. J. Edwards and C. T. Edwards, Population Limiting Factors. *Nature Education Knowledge* 3(10):1,(2011).

<sup>10</sup> Demographic projection is a statistical exercise that help to interpret the future import of data.

This assessment of the Ghanaian scenario is consistent with the Pew Research projection, which indicates that by 2050, Muslims (2.8 billion, or 30% of the world population), and Christians (2.9 billion, or 31%), will likely be close to parity on a global scale. This could be the first time in history,<sup>11</sup> and Muslims will likely overtake Christians as the largest religious group by the end of the century.<sup>12</sup>

### **Why are Muslims becoming the Fastest Growing Religion in Ghana?**

- **High fertility rate and youngest median age**

There is scholarly consensus on the main reasons behind Islam's growth rate globally. Demographic studies carried out by Michael Lipka and Conrad Hackett have shown that Muslims have more children than other major religious groups, including Christians, Hindus, Jews, and Buddhists. Muslim women have 2.9 children on average, which is much more than the next highest group (Christians at 2.6) and the non-Muslim average (2.2). Muslim fertility out-numbers non-Muslim fertility in all major regions with a large Muslim population. Muslim population increase is further aided by the fact that Muslims have the youngest median age (24 in 2015) of all major religious groups, more than seven years younger than non-Muslims (32). A greater proportion of Muslims will shortly reach the age when they can start having children. This, in conjunction with high fertility rates, will hasten Muslim population growth.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to what has contributed to the fast growth of Islam on the global stage, it has been observed in Ghana, for example, that Islamic growth has benefited additionally from inter-religious marriages. For example whilst Muslim women are only permitted to marry Muslim men, Muslim men who are allowed to be polygamous may marry women from other religions, leading to the conversion of the non-Muslim brides into Islam. So in Ghana, there are many instances where Christian brides for lack of access to life partners in the Christian fold end up marrying Muslims, later converting to the religion and giving birth to children who also become Muslims.

The fastest growth of the Muslim religion has implications for Christian missions for two major reasons:

1. Because of what numbers mean in an Islamic majority nation.
2. Because of the Great Commission to reach out to all people groups.

### **What Numbers Mean in an Islamic Majority Nation**

Islam is a religion of peace but when it has the numbers it can become a political force. Phillip Jenkins contends that even if the majority religion is largely tolerant, an outbreak of fanaticism every half-century or so is all that is required to ruin or eliminate a minority, as has been the fate of many religious minorities. He goes on to say that, while there has historically been a pattern of religious strife led by both Christian and Muslim majorities, the contemporary threat of intolerance and persecution primarily comes from the Islamic side of the equation. He notes that for whatever reasons, interreligious violence in recent years tends to be initiated by Muslims against Christians, and that trend is unlikely to change. Given that the Church in Ghana will be fighting for survival rather than expansion, this projected future trend may have major ramifications for Christian missions. Jenkins correctly notes that because so few scholars ever write about the end of a church or religious movement and instead prefer to share narratives of ascent and growth, the Church does not pay enough attention to this unpleasant fact. Jenkins recalls the Albigensian Church, which was once a powerful force in Mediaeval Western Europe, the Nestorian Church, which was once the largest and most widespread institution in the world but had almost ceased to exist by 1500, and the large Christian minorities in Turkey, which were squeezed out of existence within two decades.<sup>14</sup>

Numbers do not mean much to Christianity but not to Islam. In Islam, numbers mean a lot because for Muslims they determine the social, political and religious balance in any community. For example in 2002, The Coalition of Muslim Organisations in Ghana rejected the final figures of the 2000 population census because for them it contained serious flaws and as a result could not be used as reliable data for planning and projecting

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<sup>11</sup> Pew Research, *The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050: Why Muslims Are Rising Fastest and the Unaffiliated Are Shrinking as a Share of the World's Population*, accessed July 17, 2023,

<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/>

<sup>12</sup> Michael Lipka and Conrad Hackett, *Why Muslims are the world's fastest-growing religious group*, accessed July 17, 2023,

<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2017/04/06/why-muslims-are-the-worlds-fastest-growing-religious-group/>

<sup>13</sup> Lipka and Hackett, *Why Muslims are the world's fastest-growing religious group*, accessed July 17, 2023,

<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2017/04/06/why-muslims-are-the-worlds-fastest-growing-religious-group/>

<sup>14</sup> Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 197-199.

the country's development agenda.<sup>15</sup> Numbers are crucial to Islam because the Koran is unequivocal about it. The 6<sup>th</sup> verse of the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Koran called Al-Isra has this to say:

ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَا لَكُمُ الْكُرَّةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَمْدَدْنَاكُمْ بِأَمْوَالٍ وَبَنِينَ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ أَكْثَرَ نَفِيرًا ٦

*Then after your repentance We would give you the upper hand over them and aid you with wealth and offspring, causing you to outnumber them.*<sup>16</sup>

So outnumbering is one of the key ideologies of Islam and many verses in the Koran especially in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Koran called At-tawba provide progressive instructions to Muslims on what to implement after outnumbering and overpowering the people they once had a cordial relationship with.<sup>17</sup> Sandy Bradford has identified four stages of Islamic progression in any community:

- i. Infiltration
- ii. Consolidation of power
- iii. Open war with leadership and culture and
- iv. Totalitarian Theocracy.<sup>18</sup>

About the Islamization agenda of Africa and Islamic progression on the continent, Jenkins using events that took place in Nigeria observes the following:

Tensions grew during the 1980s, As Muslim forces became determined not just to halt Christian advances but to press for a full-scale evangelization of Africa, a project backed by the mighty financial resources of Middle Eastern oil states. In 1989 the Nigerian federal capital of Abuja hosted an "Islam in Africa" conference. The exact conclusions of this gathering are controversial, and some conspiracy theories have published what purport to be secret plans for the violent Islamization of the continent, culminating in the subjugation and forced conversion of all non-believers. However we treat such materials, there is no question that the Abuja gathering coincided with a vociferous campaign for the application of *Shari'a* law wherever feasible. The plight of Nigeria's Christian minorities under Muslim rule, never easy, has deteriorated since the early 1990s when Muslim-dominated states began imposing *Shari'a*. Local authorities in these areas hinder the building or repair of Churches, while actively sponsoring Islamic causes, paying for pilgrimages and mosque-building.<sup>19</sup>

If the progression argument is tenable, then at the rate of Islamic growth, Ghana which is presently dominantly Christian could become in the future an Islamic country like Turkey a formally Christian nation which is now an Islamic country. To the Christian community in Ghana, this could be a wake-up call to possibly salvage the Christian legacy in this country for future generations.

### What Numbers are Supposed to Mean to Christians

Numbers may not have meant much to the Ghanaian Church, but the first conclusion of the last three censuses for Christian ministry in Ghana is that numbers must come to mean something to the Church. Though the Ghanaian Church has been much concerned about the qualitative and structural growth of its missions, this demographic growth of Islam and the possible implication of its numbers to the Christian mission is a call to the Church in Ghana to revisit and embrace the theology of numerical growth.

Richard Foli observes that numerical church growth can be identified in the books of Acts. He makes a chronological discourse of numerical growth as it occurred in the book of Acts as follows:

- In Acts 1:15 the Church had a humble beginning of 120 people.
- In Acts 2:41 as a result of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, the church witnessed an addition of three thousand (3000) people. According to Foli, this is the first recorded quantitative growth.

<sup>15</sup> Muslims cry foul over population figures, accessed 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022, [http://www.muslimpopulation.com/africa/ghana/mus\\_cry.php](http://www.muslimpopulation.com/africa/ghana/mus_cry.php)

<sup>16</sup> Surah Al-Isra 17-6, accessed 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022, <https://quran.com/al-isra>

<sup>17</sup> Niaz A. Shah, "The Use of Force Under Islamic Law", *The European Journal of International Law -EJIL* .Vol. 24 no. 1, (2013): 344-349. accessed November 8, 2021, doi:10.1093/ejil/cht013.

<sup>18</sup> Sandy Bradford, Senate Judiciary Exhibit 1 of 24<sup>th</sup> January 2017, Bill Number: SB 97, accessed November 16, 2021, <https://leg.mt.gov/bills/2017/Minutes/Senate/Exhibits/jus17a01.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 202.

- In Acts 2:47 the scriptures recount that the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved. This daily numerical addition, according to Foli was the result of the daily spiritual equipping of the saints as recorded in Acts 2:42.
- In Acts 4:4 the numerical growth of the church is recorded as the membership of men alone had grown to be five thousand (5000).
- In Acts 5:14 the numerical growth of the church had reached, according to Foli, the realm of multitudes "as more men and women were added to their number".
- In Acts 6:7 Foli opines the numerical growth recorded was a direct effect of the quality growth of the church in the word. Here Foli observes that the word multiplication is used instead of addition.
- In Acts 9:31 he underscores the fact that extension growth is observed as other churches (in Samaria, Galilee and Judea) that were planted beyond Jerusalem also increased numerically.
- In Acts 13:47-49, 17:6 and 19: 10 Foli denotes the impact of cross-cultural outreaches by Paul and Barnabas. This according to Foli led to a multitude of people in the uttermost part of the earth and other nations having access to salvation.<sup>20</sup>

The numerical growth of the Church can also be identified in other biblical passages:

- In Isaiah 2:2-3 and in Micah 4:1-2 the Church as the mountain of the Lord has been prophesied to be established above all other institutions in the last days and is to become a place of convergence of many people to be taught the ways and the law of the Lord.
- In Isaiah 9:7 the increase of the Church has no end because the zeal of the Lord is involved in its performance.
- In Matthew 16:18 Jesus promised to build his church and that no gates of hell would be able to prevail against it.
- In Matthew 28:18-19 the Church has been empowered to make disciples of all nations with the Lord himself assisting us till the end of the age.
- In John 12:32 Jesus promised to draw all men to himself when he is lifted up.

The Greek language has a wide and varied vocabulary for the concept of crowds and large numbers of people. One such word is *ochlos*. *Ochlos* is a general term that implies "a crowd or throng."<sup>21</sup> The following biblical verses indicate the critical significance that numbers or many people, expressed in Greek as *ochlos*, played in the Church's historical discourses.

- In Matthew 27:17-27 Pilate is seen condemning Jesus Christ. Though he found no basis for his crucifixion he succumbed to the pressure from the multitude (*ochlos*, Matthew 27:24) who was in large number.
- In Acts 6:7 The word of God continued to increase, and the number (*ochlos*) of disciples in Jerusalem continued to grow rapidly. Even a large number (*ochlos*) of priests became obedient to the faith.
- In Acts 13:45 when the Jews saw the gathering of the whole gentile city of Antioch in Pisidia described as a multitude (*ochlos*) they were filled with envy.
- In Acts 14:11,13,18 the people (*ochlos*) saw what Paul had done and called him a god, and the priest of Jupiter would have made a sacrifice with the people (*ochlos*), but the speech of Paul restrained the people (*ochlos*) from offering a sacrifice to him.
- In Acts 14:19 Jews from Iconium came to persuade the people (*ochlos*) who stoned him and dragged him outside the city.
- In Acts 16:22, 17:5,17:13, 19:25-34 the people (*ochlos*) stirred up by the Jews stood against the mission of Paul and the growth of the gospel.

The above points to the fact that wherever numbers tilt on the side of the Christian mission, it succeeds and strives, but when the numbers were against the Christian mission it suffered loss and was aborted. The Ghanaian Church's attitude towards numbers needs to be reconsidered since the numerical growth of the Church has a strong theological foundation as demonstrated in the prophetic, historical, and eschatological biblical passages.

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<sup>20</sup> Richard Foli, *Towards Church Growth in Ghana*. (Accra: Trust Publishers, 1996), 58-62.

<sup>21</sup> Jeffrey T Schnapp, *Crowds* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 278.

## **What Could Have Contributed to the Plateauing and the Lack of Growth in the Number of Christians in Ghana?**

In trying to understand the lack of numerical growth witnessed by Christianity in Ghana as exhibited by the population censuses of 2000, 2010 and 2021, there is a need to consider certain contributive factors such as:

**Low fertility among Christians.** High fertility is one factor that comes up when evaluating factors that propelled the rapid growth of Muslims on a worldwide scale. There hasn't been any investigation on the potential causes of the high fertility rate among Muslims in Ghana. But other studies have found that Muslims have a high fertility rate because they don't practise family planning as much as Christian homes do, where family planning is highly accepted.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, polygamy is a practice that Muslims engage in whereas Christians abhor it. On the basis of population expansion driven by fertility, Muslims will undoubtedly outnumber Christians.

### **Emergence of a Selective Form Christianity in Ghana and Lack of Qualitative Growth.**

One thing that has proven to contribute to the quantitative growth of the Church is the qualitative growth of the individual believer (2 Timothy 2:2, Hebrews 5:12, Luke 22:32). Qualitative growth majorly focuses on making sure that God's desire according to Ephesians 4:13 and Matthew 28:19, to see individual congregants becoming growing disciples of Christ in faith, in the knowledge of the son of God, unto the measure of the stature of Christ. This kind of growth can only be achieved when there is a system put in place for the individual believer to grow in certain spiritual disciplines such as fellowship, personal devotions, giving, personal sanctification, bible study, worship, service to mankind and lay ministry. Qualitative growth is also referred to as internal growth.<sup>23</sup> The list of indices that may be accepted interdenominationally to measure the qualitative growth of congregants are Bible knowledge, personal devotions, worship, witnessing, lay ministry, missions, giving, fellowship, distinctive lifestyle, attitude toward religion, social service and social justice.<sup>24</sup>

Today in the Ghanaian Christian landscape most of these spiritual disciplines have become outmoded or almost irrelevant to contemporary Christians and there is the emergence of a form of Christians that have become very selective in their spirituality and have abandoned those spiritual pathways that were supposed to enhance the believer's encounter with God. Today the majority of Christians have become selective and prefer a form of Christianity that is less demanding, characterized by

- learning the word of God only through the sermon preached in Church rather than having in addition to that a personal study of the word of God.
- depending only on what is being prophesied rather than learning to hear God personally.
- depending only on prayers offered in mass gatherings rather than learning to have a personal devotion with God.
- liturgies that are preoccupied with solving life crises rather than helping congregants have personal encounters with God.
- too many activities in Church rather than helping the believer have more time to reach out to family members and friends.
- Over-concentration on denominational programs rather than activities that unify the whole body of Christ.

**Heavy Blow to Ecumenical Bodies That Intentionally Focused on Spirituality and Christian Unity.** Two Christian organizations in Ghana that played a yeoman's job in ensuring the spirituality of believers are the Scripture Union (SU) in secondary schools and the Ghana Fellowship of Evangelical Students (GHAFES) in universities. David N.A Kpobi opines that the ecumenical group "which has had the most pervasive influence on the Ghanaian Christian scene is the Scripture Union which first came into Ghana in 1890."<sup>25</sup> This group, according to Kpobi, was formed with the objective of promoting spirituality in the existing churches through a thorough study of the scriptures. Kpobi observes that as a non-denominational fellowship, it attracted Christians from all denominations. The major activities during these meetings were prayer, singing, Bible study and

<sup>22</sup> S.Y. Quraishi, "Muslims' low practice of family planning. India. Low levels of education, particularly among women, is one of the major reasons behind high fertility rates". *Integration* 47:23-7. (1996) Spring; PMID: 12347305, accessed July 21, 2023, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12347305/>

<sup>23</sup> Foli, *Towards Church Growth in Ghana*, Accra: Trust Publishers, 1996, 53.

<sup>24</sup> Peter C. Wagner, *Leading Your Church To Growth: The Secret of Pastor/People Partnership in Dynamic Church Growth*. Ventura: Regal books, 1984, 25-26.

<sup>25</sup> David N.A. Kpobi, *Mission in Ghana: The Ecumenical Heritage*. Accra: Asempra Publishers, 2008, 131.



worship.<sup>26</sup> Kpobi remarks that though the SU first came into Ghana in 1890, the year 1952 is regarded as the year in which it started to take root.

Kpobi notes that SU groups were formed in secondary schools and training colleges all over the country. The aftermath of the evangelical revival of the 1960s and the 1970s in Ghana resulted in the creation of several ecumenical and nondenominational fellowships such as: the Ghana Evangelical Society, the Hour of Visitation Choir and Evangelistic Association (HOVCEA), Youth Ambassadors for Christ Association (YAFCA). In many towns and cities all over the country, Town fellowships were formed to serve as platforms for fellowship for students who belonged to the ecumenical Scripture Union (SU). According to Kpobi, products of SU who continued their educations in the universities carried on the fellowship they had acquired into the University Christian Fellowship (UCF)<sup>27</sup> which was changed to GHAFES (Ghana Fellowship of Evangelical Students) in 1975. Kpobi remarks that the activities of those ecumenical bodies were so “conspicuous” and “effective” that the university authorities willingly involved them in the running of worship services and programs on university campuses.<sup>28</sup>

Kpobi observes that the activities of ecumenical bodies like SU and GHAFES have contributed immensely to the qualitative, quantitative and structural growth of churches in Ghana. According to him the many town fellowships that grew out of the activities of SU and GHAFES during vacation periods “maintained an ecumenical stand.”<sup>29</sup> He observes that the teenagers that were groomed under the tutelage of SU fed the qualitative and quantitative growth of many denominations since SU refused to be metamorphosed into a church and insisted on its members to remain in the churches they belonged to.<sup>30</sup> Kpobi however discloses that many of the town fellowships that resulted from the activities of SU and GHAFES evolved into churches in the 1970s and the 1980s. When it comes to structural and leadership growth and development, Kpobi records that a number of ministers and church leaders in all Ghanaian churches except the Roman Catholic Church have gained some sort of “spiritual and character formation” through their contact with the activities of SU.<sup>31</sup> Kpobi remarks on the role SU and GHAFES had played in the worship life of believers in this country by being the breeding ground that led to the emergence of numerous ecumenical and evangelistic singing groups such as Joyful Way Incorporated, Calvary Road, New Creation, Abundant life and the Jesus Generation.<sup>32</sup>

The activity of ecumenical bodies suffered a heavy blow when Pentecostal and Neo-pentecostal churches began to introduce their fellowship groups on the University campuses. E. Kingsley Larbi notes that “there was no Pentecostal fellowship in any of the institutions of higher learning up to about 1976.” Larbi opines that the pioneering work of PENSAs (Pentecost Students and Associates) that was created by the Church of Pentecost for its tertiary and secondary student body in 1980, “has now given rise to a rather unsavory phenomenon where almost all the Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches have separate fellowships at the various institutions of learning, especially the universities.”<sup>33</sup>

This floodgate of denominationalism in the University Christian student fellowships has today given rise to a new trend where every denomination both in the mainline and Pentecostal Churches have created their respective student fellowships to preserve their “products” on the university campuses and on some secondary schools. The campuses are presently scattered with small groups of denomination-oriented fellowships. This trend is posing a serious threat to the survival of ecumenism and the very ideals of Christian unity. Initially, the Christian fellowships on University campuses were all ecumenical, giving a strong voice to believers. But now the trend is that all the major denominations, the mainline churches and Pentecostal and charismatic churches have their representative university campus fellowships. The splinter revolution has led to the scenario where the fellowships that have home-based support are growing whilst the ecumenical student fellowships like SU, and GHAFES are battling to remain in existence. These events have dealt a heavy blow to spirituality in the secondary schools and the universities since most of the splinter groups have no focus on spiritual disciplines and Christ-like disciple making as the SU and GHAFES concentrated on.

<sup>26</sup> Kpobi, *Mission in Ghana: The Ecumenical Heritage*, 132.

<sup>27</sup> Kpobi, *Mission in Ghana: The Ecumenical Heritage*, 133.

<sup>28</sup> Kpobi, *Mission in Ghana: The Ecumenical Heritage*, 133.

<sup>29</sup> Kpobi, *Mission in Ghana: The Ecumenical Heritage*, 134.

<sup>30</sup> Kpobi, *Mission in Ghana: The Ecumenical Heritage*, 134.

<sup>31</sup> Kpobi, *Mission in Ghana: The Ecumenical Heritage*, 134.

<sup>32</sup> Kpobi, *Mission in Ghana: The Ecumenical Heritage*, 135.

<sup>33</sup> E. Kingsley Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*. Accra: Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, 2001, 200.

### **Lack of Intentional Structural Growth and Christ-like Disciplemaking**

There can not be effective and sustainable numerical growth without structural growth. For Martin Goldsmith structural growth refers to the organization, the leadership and the planning that exists to help and ensure numerical growth is accompanied by qualitative growth.<sup>34</sup> The absence of adequate structural growth to match the quantitative and qualitative growth would lead to the disintegration of fellowship and the breakdown of pastoral care. It is important to note that structural growth has a biblical basis when it was first introduced by the apostles in Acts 6:1-7 by the institution of order, structure, and the laity to mitigate the challenges associated with the church and promote sound fellowship among the brethren.

Gene Mims highlights the biblical and theological roots of structural growth in that “Paul preached but others baptized (1 Corinthians 1:17)”, and observes the interplay of ministry structures and teams that allow “some to plant and others water (1 Corinthians 3:7-9).”<sup>35</sup>

In Acts 6:1-6 the theological foundation for the appropriate structure and lay leadership needed for holistic church growth is indisputably laid. There cannot be effective quantitative and qualitative church growth without a matching structural growth. 2 Timothy 2:2 underscores the Pauline theology of disciple-making and training of lay leadership in support of the growth and expansion of the church.

Sound structural growth can only be achieved in intentional Christ-like disciple making. JFK Mensah defines Christ-like disciple-making as the strategy of concentrating your energy, time and talents upon a few prayerfully selected believers to teach, train and build them in the image of Christ until they can also reproduce similar disciples for Jesus (Matthew 28:19, 2Timothy 2:2, 1 Corinthians 11:1).<sup>36</sup>

The Church in Ghana, in the quest of fulfilling the vision of Christ for the Church in making Christ-like disciple-makers, is generally faced with the challenge of:

- i. providing attractive events and appealing programs for the members as against building Churches known for their culture of love, character, commitment and service to God.
- ii. focusing on the number of people in attendance, the crowd and the testimonies against the surety of names registered in heaven. Luke 10:20
- iii. bothering about the state of physical assets a desire which could be an important tool to draw people to God as against the holistic building and growth of the individual member who is actually the Church and must be the objective of the Christian mission. 1 Corinthians.12:22,26-27
- iv. filling people’s heads with Bible verses and principles as against the observance and the application of the Word so as to raise individuals that are modeled after Christ in the community.

For the Church in Ghana to become a disciple-making Church and ensure structural growth, here are a few suggestions:

- i. **The Church must exhibit Passion and Commitment.** The Church should understand that disciple making is not a program, an event or a ministry, it is a lifelong commitment to the lifestyle of manifesting Christ and letting him be reproduced in others. John 2:17, Galatians 4:18
- ii. **Following the Jesus model.** When Jesus began His ministry his top priority was to recruit and train disciples. Matthew 4:18-19, John 15:8. The Ghanaian Church needs to re-focus on being like Christ in recruiting and training disciples.
- iii. **Intentionality.** The Church in Ghana needs to be intentional to guide people who join the Church through a strategic learning and developmental process and encourage each believer to have a trustworthy and competent Christian partner who will hold them accountable. 1 Corinthians.4:1
- iv. **Investing in Children/youth.** The Church in Ghana needs to invest more in children, teens, and youth than adults. This is where the greatest return can be. When the Church focuses more energy on resuscitating adults rather than nurturing children, she will have more ground to cover because she has to undo much more than she would in working with children. Joel 2:28, Mark.10:14

### **Scalp Hunting Evangelism**

Another thing that has entrapped the Church in Ghana and has militated against her numerical growth is scalp hunting evangelism. What is scalp hunting evangelism? To understand scalp hunting evangelism it is proper to

<sup>34</sup> Martin Goldsmith, *Can My Church Grow*. Sevenoaks: Hodder and Stoughton, 1980, 16.

<sup>35</sup> Gene Mims, *Kingdom Principles For Church Growth*. Nashville: LifeWay Christian Resources, 2008, 119.

<sup>36</sup> Rev. and Mrs J.F.K Mensah, *Making Christlike Disciples: A Manual for Christlike Disciple-Making* (Accra:Great Commission Church International, 2013),24.

understand scalp hunting. Scalp hunting was a warfare practice during which cutting or tearing a part of the human scalp with hair attached, from the head, and showing it as a trophy<sup>37</sup>

So in scalp hunting evangelism, it is not the soul of the person that is sought after but a head count that is pursued. Scalp hunting evangelism is reaching the souls who are already saved with the sole intention of adding them to the number of members of the various Churches. In this case, churches are registering new entrants that are from other churches. The resulting effect is that some local churches witness growth that does not reflect the growth of Christianity at the national level. The shifting cultivation in farming where the farmer cultivates temporality a particular plot of land and later moves to another plot can be used as a metaphor to explain what scalp hunting evangelism is. So scalp hunting evangelism is the arrogance and zeal of having in a Christian community people who are already Christians from other Christian denominations and call it growth. When a church becomes solely preoccupied with scalp hunting evangelism, it counts the number of heads but there is practically no commitment to follow and for proper disciple making. Today the main type of evangelism the Church in Ghana has found herself mainly involved in is scalp hunting evangelism.

Gumah and Amoah-Mensah added their view to the plateauing growth of the Church in Ghana to scalp hunting evangelism when they observed that:

When churches win “converts”, that are already believers but not active in their congregation, such people are already recorded Christians, therefore their numbers do not increase the Christian figures (Percentage-wise, if they were counted in Ghana) as they have just moved from one denomination to another one (and Christians call such a person new convert which ideally is not so- “recycled souls”). Hence the Christian figures will not appreciate. So in effect, the person has just changed church but the religion is still the same.<sup>38</sup>

According to Gumah and Amoah-Mensah, the prevalence of scalp hunting evangelism indicates that Christian growth in Ghana may have reached its elastic limit, as the passion for soul winning and frontier ministry may be waning, and that if much work is not done and our style of evangelism is not addressed, the continuous decline in growth will not be reversed.<sup>39</sup>

It is undoubtedly clear that one of the implications of the 2000, 2010, and 2021 population censuses is that the survival of Christianity in Ghana is dependent, in addition to the aforementioned recommendations, on a review and revitalisation of evangelism. The move that must be adopted must be akin to the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference. To understand exactly what the Ghanaian Church must do there is a need to learn some lessons of history from the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference at a time when the Church was faced with the challenge of reaching out to the unreached people in their time or abandoning the harvest field to the Islamic invasion.

### **What lessons to learn from the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference**

At the turn of the century, a missionary conference was called to bring together major protestant denominations and missionary societies predominantly from North America and Europe. There were 1200 delegates who met in Edinburgh, Scotland. The president of the conference was Lord Balfour of the Church of Scotland and a former Unionist cabinet minister. The leaders were John R. Mott an American Methodist and Joseph Oldham a Presbyterian Scottish. None of them were ministers of the gospel. The leaders were young and not beyond their 30s. Before the conference, 8 commissions were convened and were assigned to research specific topics so that they could facilitate the discussion on specific topics. Each commission consisting of twenty members produced a single volume report which was distributed to all the delegates before they headed to Scotland. The 8 commissions and their dates of presentations at the conference were as follows:

- i. The commission on “Carrying the gospel to all non-Christian world”- June 15, 1910
- ii. The commission on “The Church in the Mission Field.”-June 16, 1910
- iii. The commission on “Education in Relation to the Christianization of National life.”- June 17, 1910
- iv. The commission on “Missionary Message in Relation to the Non-Christian World.”-June 18, 1910
- v. The commission on “Preparation of Missionaries.”-June 22, 1910
- vi. The commission on “The Home base of Missionaries.”- June 23, 1910
- vii. The commission on “Missions and Governments.”- June 20, 1910

<sup>37</sup> Anastasia M. Griffin, *Georg Friederici's Scalping and Similar Warfare Customs in America with a Critical Introduction* (University of Colorado at Boulder, 2008)18.

<sup>38</sup> Gumah and Amoah-Mensah, *Analysis of 2021 Census Data and Its Implications for The Ghanaian Church*, 53.

<sup>39</sup> Gumah and Amoah-Mensah, *Analysis of 2021 Census Data and Its Implications for The Ghanaian Church*, 53.

viii. The commission on “Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity.”- June 21, 1910

The overall theme of the conference was “The Evangelization of the World in this Generation.” The theme drove the conference with a sense of urgency and the 8<sup>th</sup> commission convinced the attendees that if there is going to be the evangelization of the world in one generation, it will take the unity of the Church. The conference set up a continuation committee under the leadership of John Mott and Joseph Oldham to see ways in which decisions taken at the conference could be practicalized. One of the outcomes was the formation of the International Missionary Council (IMC). The modern missionary movement of the Church started as a concerted effort.

Interestingly one of the suggestions of Gumah and Amoah-Mensah about what the Church should do in the face of the growth of Islam is that of collective efforts of leaders in all denominations and ecumenical bodies to deliberate and agree on steps to take. A Missionary conference akin to the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference could be called upon to deliberate on the future of the Church in Ghana and practical steps to adopt to enhance its growth.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Many articles in addition to this one has been written on the 2000, 2010 and 2021 population censuses and implication for missions. The Ghana Evangelism Committee: 2023 Mid-Year Report which contains a detailed analysis of the population statistics and valuable recommendations on what the Ghanaian Church is recommended. For example, four categories of evangelism that could be adopted to effectively evangelize the unreached urban dweller were recommended in my article entitled “*Rethinking Urban Mission: Reconsidering Strategic Cell Fellowships As Tools To Reach And Disciple The Unreached Sub-Saharan Urban Dwellers.*”<sup>40</sup> These are discussed below

### 1. Evangelism to win nominal Christians back to the faith

According to Foli this type of evangelism seeks to win nominal Christians back to their personal faith in the Lord and into a renewed commitment in the Christian walk. This type of evangelism though has numerical benefit to the church is primarily targeted at the qualitative or internal growth of the nominal Christian.<sup>41</sup> Many individuals when they move from the rural area to the urban area lose their bearings and remain out of worship and Christian fellowship for a certain season. This type of evangelism organised by the mother church or by the home cells or strategic cells can help bring back to the fold the nominal believer who could get the confidence to locate a place of fellowship on their own in the city.

### 2. Evangelism beyond the “Stained-Glass Barrier”

Foli observes that churches that envision winning more souls must go beyond the “stained-glass barrier” of the church into the community around the church. Winter opines that this kind of evangelism taking place amongst people who share similar linguistics, socio-economic realities and social heritage, would result in a harvest of people who would quickly feel at home and find the pattern of worship quite congenial.<sup>42</sup> This type of evangelism can easily lead to the establishment of strategic cell fellowships that consist of individuals with similar linguistics, socio-economic realities and social heritage.

### 3. Intra-Cultural Evangelism

Foli claims church growth results when evangelism is culturally biased. According to him, this kind of evangelism focuses on reaching out to people of similar cultures and would eventually lead to the formation of separate congregations, home cells, or strategic cells that will act as bases for effective outreach to people of the same culture.<sup>43</sup>

### 4. Cross-Cultural Evangelism

Foli underscores cross-cultural evangelism as a fourth type of evangelism, which, unlike intra-cultural evangelism, seeks to cross barriers and plant a church amongst people of different cultures.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> E. J. Abrahams-Appiah, “Rethinking Urban Mission: Reconsidering Strategic Cell Fellowships as Tools to Reach and Disciple the Unreached Sub-Saharan Urban Dwellers,” *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies*, 8 no.10 (2022): 301-313. <https://doi.org/10.38159/erats.20228103>

<sup>41</sup> Foli, “Towards Church Growth in Ghana”, 54.

<sup>42</sup> Foli, “Towards Church Growth in Ghana”, 55.

<sup>43</sup> Foli, “Towards Church Growth in Ghana”, 55.

<sup>44</sup> Foli, “Towards Church Growth in Ghana”, 55.

## CONCLUSION

This article has discussed the implications for Christian missions as a result of a projected demographic shift in the religious landscape of Ghana. It has proven that a substantial change in the religious landscape, with a steady rise in the Muslim population, is depicted in an analysis of Ghana's demographic patterns as revealed by the 2000, 2010, and 2021 censuses. According to the projections, Ghana may have a majority of Muslims by the year 2096. The implications of this radical demographic shift for Christian missions in the nation are significant. It has proposed that Christian mission organisations and Churches working in Ghana need to take the initiative to address this demographic shift. In order to engage with and effectively minister to Ghanaians' different religious beliefs and practises, it is crucial to reevaluate its internal qualitative, structural and quantitative growth and mission strategies as the religious landscape changes. To bridge the gap between Christian outreach and a primarily Muslim community, applying culturally sensitive, collaborative efforts, and contextually appropriate techniques will be crucial.

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