

What Mainstream Research Isn't Telling You About Holy Spirit's Activity Across the Globe

According to some reports, Christianity is expanding rapidly around the globe (This figure is obviously contested with many researchers offering lower numbers. Several estimate the numbers to be around 2.2 billion.) Some researchers are suggesting that as many as 3.2 billion out of 7 billion people, currently claim to be followers of Jesus. The common assertion that Islam is outpacing Christianity is proving to be erroneous. Dr. Rodney Stark, a noted researcher based out of Baylor University, declared in his book, *Triumph of Faith: Why the World is More Religious Than Ever*:

As recently as April 2015, the Pew Research Center declared that Muslims will soon overtake Christians by way of superior fertility. They won't. ... Islam generates very little growth through conversions, while Christianity enjoys a substantial conversion rate, especially in nations located in what my colleague Philip Jenkins describes as the "global south"—Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. And these conversions do not include the millions of converts being gained in China. Thus, current growth trends project an increasingly Christian world.'

The church in Latin America, Africa and Asia is currently experiencing unprecedented growth. In many of the darkest corners of the world, astonishing numbers of people are turning to Christianity. In contrast to other religions, the followers of Jesus are literally showing up everywhere. Stark observes that "Christianity is not only the largest religion

in the world; it also is the least regionalized ... There are only trivial numbers of Muslims in the Western Hemisphere and in East Asia." Christianity is currently surging in the war-torn Middle East and most everywhere else on earth.

While God's glory is on display around the world, not all nations are experiencing the same measure of impact. Christianity is certainly outpacing population growth internationally. However, it is stagnant in North America, Europe and in other Western nations (Max Weber, *Essays in Sociology*). Reflecting on this reality, Sarah Pulliam Bailey of *The Washington Times* recently wrote,

Christianity is on the decline in America, not just among younger generations or in certain regions of the country but across race, gender, education and geographic barriers. The percentage of adults who describe themselves as Christians dropped by nearly eight percentage points in just seven years to about 71 percent.

You've probably heard similar assertions before. These increasingly adverse reports are discouraging for those longing for revival. What is different about our nation and other parts of the industrialized West? Why are our expressions of Christianity currently in free fall?

Sociologist Max Weber once bemoaned that "The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization, and, above all, by the 'disenchantment of the world.'" Those words are quite insightful. With all the advanced technology and scientific theories, individuals from the West no longer possess a pervading sense of awe.

Echoing Weber, Rodney Stark observed that the industrialized world no longer "experiences the world as "enchanted"—Westerners no longer live in a world of spirits, demons, and moral forces."

Peter Kreeft, a noted philosopher and student of history, asserts

The master heresy of our civilization, our culture, our times, is not terribly new. It's been around for well over a century or two. One ... called it Modernism, and it's basically the loss of the supernatural, which means either loss of belief in the supernatural, to the loss of the sense of the supernatural."

While Christianity is advancing in much of the world, it's currently diminishing in the West due to the abandonment of the miraculous.

Reflecting on this unfortunate reality, missionary-evangelist Randy Clark made the following remarks:

North America along with Western Europe has long been considered by some to be the Nazareth of the church world. We are a nation of skeptics, and proud of it. Regardless of the evangelist that I have spoken with, I hear the same report; they do not see the same degree of healing and miracles here that they do in other non-western countries.

George Otis Jr., who has been documenting revivals for over 20 years, suggests that spiritual stagnation has gripped the West. Whether one is considering massive healing movements or other spiritual stirrings, very little of it is being expressed in our part of the world. Of the 800 awakenings Otis has documented, only two have occurred in North America. Otis writes:

Since my colleagues and I began studying transformed communities in the mid-1990s, we encountered nearly 800 examples. Astonishingly, as of late 2011, only two of these could be found in the borders of the United States, with only one other possible case in all of subarctic North America. I

know of no recent instances of transforming revival in Europe Japan, Singapore, Korea, Australia or New Zealand. As a researcher, I have to at least wonder about this ratio. How can it be that within the entire range of Western society and culture we can define only two definitive cases of transforming revival?

The reason Christianity in the West isn't keeping up with the rest of the globe is because our leaders remain hesitant about healing, deliverance and other works of power. For the most part, the organized church throughout the Industrialized world isn't open to the reality of the supernatural.

While evangelists in the third-world provoke the imagination of the masses, Western preachers are trying to persuade with politics, fierce moralism and hollow philosophical arguments. Leaders from the emerging world actually give the people something to see and hear, and all we do is placate and talk.

Let me make my point. Until the Western Church is willing to embrace the supernatural, Christianity in the industrialized world won't match the growth in Africa, Asia and Latin America. God is accomplishing incredible things, and we are mostly missing out on these wonderful stirrings.

In this unique hour, we can no longer afford to be disenchanted. {eoa}

J.D. King, director of the World Revival Network and co-pastor at World Revival Church, is writing *Regeneration: Healing in the History of Christianity*. King is a sought-after speaker, writer and author.