ALMOST BUT NOT QUITE

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Some reactions to an almost-excellent article on the growth of the Church worldwide.
Category: Church: World

Krish Kandiah who has recently become president of the London School of Theology recently published an almost-excellent article on the growth of the Church around the world. EntitledÂ The Church is growing, and here are the figures that prove it, the article takes a look at some of the latest figures on religion around the world.

Regular Kouyanet readers won't find much that is either new or surprising in Krish's article, but it's good to see a high profile Christian in the UK take a look at this sort of issue, especially one who writes as eloquently as Krish does.

> *The Church has seen dramatic and explosive growth in Asia, Africa and South America. The growth of the African Church in particular is jaw-dropping. In 1900 there were fewer than 9 million Christians in Africa. Now there are more than 541 million. In the last 15 years alone, the Church in Africa has seen a 51 per cent increase, which works out on average at around 33,000 people either becoming Christians or being born into Christian families each day in Africa alone.*

I have to admit to being slightly frustrated at some points, however:

> *Perhaps it is time that our conference organisers, publishers and missionary organisations help the Church in the West to reorient its place in the global Church, ensuring that we approach our brothers and sisters in the two-thirds world with greater humility and a willingness to learn.*

Some of us have been banging on about this sort of thing for years from the sidelines. It is a shame that those, like Krish, who are in influential places do not seem to have used used the platform they have been given to speak up on these issues. Ah well, better late than never.

However, I think there are a number of things which Krish did not say, which need to be included if we are to get an accurate picture of where the church is worldwide.

- He is quite right in the title where he says that the church is growing. It is; phenomenally. However, this is not the whole story. The world population is also growing at a great rate, and it is growing faster than the growth of the church. Proportional to the world population, the Church is actually declining. We have to run faster than this, just to stand still. It is great to rejoice in the numbers of people who are becoming Christians, but we have to avoid any sense of triumph or complacency.
- Despite the fact that Christianity is the world's largest religion, it is a simple fact that the majority of Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists on this planet have not met a Christian and are unlikely ever to do so. God's mission to the world has not run its course and we have a massive responsibility to the unreached people of this generation. That is the biggest message of the

statistics on world religions.
- Related to this is the fact that the majority of Christian mission workers are involved in serving the existing church around the world, not reaching out into areas where there are no believers. There is much more on this subject here.

If you want a good breakdown of the situation of the church worldwide, I'd point you back to this post.