THE WORLD CHURCH IN 2050

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As the world population grows, so the number of Christians around the world will grow… this will require an unprecedented growth in the number of conversions to Christianity over the next 35 years and almost all of these will happen outside of the West.
Category: Church: World

This is a somewhat more optimistic follow up to my post on the state of the British church in the year 2050 from a couple of days ago. At the outset, and to save you the bother, let me say that I realise that it is ridiculous to devote a wholeÂ blog post about the church in the UK and then toÂ cover the whole of the rest of the world in a single post. Let me give three (admittedly flimsy) mitigating factors.

- Over the next 35 years, the biggest contrast in the church will be between those in the historic lands of Christendom and the rest of the world. So, these two posts do cover that.
- I don't have the expertise or time to look at every possible part of the world in a long series of blog posts; so a generalisation will have to do.
- This is my blog and I make the rules (sorry).

The Context for the World Church

The world in 2050 will be marked by huge levels of financial, political and environmental instability. There are a number of issues visible today which could well be very significant by then, though other questions may well arise in the interim.

- The resurgence of Russia as an aggressive military power.
- The division between Sunni and Shia Islam is growing and becoming increasingly violent.
- The rise of China as an economic power and the US response to the challenge to its hegemony.
- The impact of human activity on the planet in terms of climate change, over population and pollution.

Because of these factors, it will be very difficult for Christians in different parts of the world to be in contact. Political barriers will once again separate the Church in different hemispheres as they did at the time of the cold war. Though the strongest churches will clearly be outside of the West.

It also seems unlikely that world poverty will be dealt with in the interim and many Christians will face severe hardship. The church will also face persecution in some areas, while in others it will be caught in the cross-fire between different strands of Islam.

The Church in 2050

As the world population grows, so the number of Christians around the world will grow. However, I am not convinced that the church will grow as a percentage of the world population; it will probably remain somewhere around a third. However, even this will require an unprecedented growth in the number of conversions to Christianity over the next 35 years and almost all of these will happen outside of the West.

There will be significant growth of the church in areas which are currently strongly Islamic but the biggest challenge to the spread of Christianity will lie in the mega-cities of Asia which will house a

huge proportion of the world's population.

The growing church will be theologically conservative and strongly Bible based. Independent, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches will thrive at the expense of the traditional denominations which have been imported from the West. Increasingly, the theological concerns of the new churches will reflect the questions posed by Christians inÂ Latin America, Africa and Asia rather than the Western academic tradition. Over time, Christians in the growing church will be suspicious of the church in the West which it will view as overly academic and insufficiently spiritual. Because of this, there will be a massive missionary movement from Africa, Asia and Latin America to Europe, N. America and Australasia.

This post is somewhat less controversial than my earlier one. Most of these trends can be discerned already and I've written about them numerous times over the years. To me the big imponderables are the impact of the world socio-political system on the life of the church and the relationship between the Christendom church and the rest of the world.Â

If anyone would be interested in doing a 2050 prediction for a part of the world they know well, I'd be delighted to post it here. You don't have to agree with what I've been saying!