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Believers in Christ from a Muslim Background: A Global Census

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Abstract

Since the 1960s, there has been a substantial increase in the number of known conversions from Islam to Christianity. Most of these conversions have been to forms of evangelical or Pentecostal Christianity, but there have also been conversions to Catholic and Orthodox Christianity, and still other converts claim to remain in some way both Muslims and followers of Jesus. This article explains how we obtained estimates of the number of converts, the complexities involved in this task, and an annotated list of countries by continent with the estimated number of believers in Christ from a Muslim background. The article includes charts with maximal, minimal, and medium estimates of this population from 1960 to the present.

Since the 1960s, substantial numbers of Muslims have become believers in Christ. We refer to these individuals as BMBs, which is short for “believers in Christ from a Muslim background,” a slight modification of the more common term MBB, or “Muslim-background believer.” BMB is preferred because it emphasizes the individuals’ present conviction rather than their previous religious affiliation. The purpose of this project is to provide a global census with estimates of how many believers from a Muslim background live in each country and to provide data spanning the period from 1960 to 2010 on how many BMBs there are worldwide. Some of the results of this research are included in Johnstone’s 2011 *The Future of the Global Church: History, Trends and Possibilities*, and an earlier revision of the BMB numbers is included as Appendix A in Duane Miller’s 2014 doctoral thesis.¹ However, to the best of our knowledge, this is the first such global census ever to be published.

Research for this project began in the 1960s when Patrick Johnstone started to collect information on the size and nature of Christian communities in different countries throughout the world. This resulted in six editions of the book *Operation World* (from 1964 through 2001), of which Johnstone was the author. The seventh and most recent edition of *Operation World* was edited by Jason Mandryk and was published in 2010. The purpose of the *Operation World* books has been to provide a profile of each country in the world, including information on the ethnic and religious breakdown, with the hope of aiding Christians and Christian ministries that focus on world missions, evangelism, and prayer. Religious and denominational information was gleaned from national surveys and censuses, solicited from missionaries and indigenous workers, and culled from official records of groups such as the Lutheran World Federation and the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Ethnolinguistic data were based extensively on personal research, the work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics’ *Ethnologue*, and the database associated with the *World Christian Encyclopedia*. There has been a long history of close collaboration and mutual sharing of information among *Operation World*, the Summer Institute of Linguistics, and the *World Christian Encyclopedia*.

The results of this massive, multidecade data collection effort were eventually made available in the form of the religious data on the Operation World website, which is hosted by Global Mapping International, and the ethnolinguistic data on the interactive website of the Joshua Project, for which Johnstone was a senior editor. Therefore additional details on the sources of our information can be found

¹ A PDF file of this dissertation and all of Miller’s other articles can be downloaded through his page at www.academia.edu.

at the website of the Joshua Project, which is currently managed by the U.S. Center for World Missions.²

One of the benefits of these data having been presented and re-presented in multiple editions of *Operation World* is that readers and workers have had many chances to question and scrutinize the figures. The various editions of *Operation World* have sold about 2.5 million copies. This has resulted in a detailed and peer-evaluated breakdown of the sizes of religious and ethnic communities for every country in the world. These figures attempt to take into account the reality of emigration by BMBs from countries where persecution may exist, thus avoiding double counting of BMBs. The apogee of Johnstone's research project was published as *The Future of the Global Church: History, Trends and Possibilities* (2011).³ An earlier revision of the BMB numbers is included as Appendix A in Miller's 2014 doctoral dissertation.

Other reliable sources of information are research articles that are largely internal to the Christian missionary community and missionaries themselves. Some research articles have been published in journals such as the *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, *St. Francis Magazine*, and the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. These publications are available to the nonspecialist, although their readership consists mostly of missionaries and scholars of Christian missions. There are also documents that may not have been published but are shared via e-mail, exchanged at conferences, or downloaded from secure websites. These are even less publicly available than are the articles published in the journals just mentioned. Examples of such documents are "Mapping People Groups in [Country Name]⁴ for Informed Church Planting" by Warrick Farah and *The Camel* by Kevin Greeson (2010). In these documents, Christian missionaries and mission strategists may evaluate their progress or lack of progress in certain regions and try to share their findings. Therefore these documents tend to value accuracy, and where there is not a specific number, they will often provide a range of numbers representing what they believe to be the best estimate, including high and low estimates. We have utilized several such documents as sources of data for our census.

Operation World and *The Future of the Global Church* touched only briefly on the topic of Christian believers from a Muslim background. However, extensive data on this topic had already been collected. From that database, a spreadsheet focusing on BMBs was composed, and additional information from Miller's doctoral research at the Centre for the Study of World Christianity (University of

² For instance, for more details on our data sources, see joshuaproject.net/help/data_sources.

³ A video of an interview with Johnstone on the origins of the *Operation World* project is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=2r98qQrpGY8#t=15.

⁴ Name of country withheld for security of existing ministries.

Edinburgh) on converts from Islam was incorporated.⁵ The five decades of gathering, assessing, and then interpolating and extrapolating known data in this way have provided a foundation of credibility for the broader religious and ethnographic information that is provided. This then gives a solid basis for the methodology for our estimates in this article.

That having been said, it is appropriate to examine in more detail the reasons that make such a research endeavor so difficult and complex.

UNDERREPORTING AND OVERREPORTING

The number of known converts from Islam to Christianity has increased significantly since the 1960s. As David Garrison (2014: 5) writes, “Muslim movements to Christ are taking place in numbers we’ve never seen before.” However, accurately estimating the number of such converts is very difficult, and in this section, we explain why.

There are multiple motives for both overreporting and underreporting of the numbers. On the side of overreporting, or at least using overly optimistic figures, the most obvious reason is related to fund-raising. When Christian missions are raising funds for their endeavors in converting Muslims or when indigenous Christian ministers (including BMBs) are doing so, there is a natural tendency to inflate numbers. Edward Ayub (2009: 25), a Christian from a Muslim background (CMB)⁶ and pastor in Bangladesh, writes of his frustration about this issue:

[B]ecause numbers are held to be the most important evidence of God’s blessing, they produce exaggerated reports. Someone abroad asked me whether 10,000 mosques have been converted into Christian Churches in Dhaka. I had to answer that I know of none.

However, this is not to say that none of such material can be used; but when it is, there is a tendency to use the most generous possible way of counting converts, and this is something to be kept in mind in trying to make accurate estimates.

Overcalculation is also done by Muslims at times. In an interview on Al Jazeera in 2000, Sheikh Ahmad al Katani stated the rather surprising conclusion that in Africa, “[b]ecause of the Christian missionaries every hour Islam loses 667 Muslims [who] convert to Christianity, every day 16,000, [and] every year six

⁵ This spreadsheet, which contains details on the sources and dates for data, may be made available to researchers who contact the authors by e-mail.

⁶ The acronym CMB refers specifically to a Christian from a Muslim background. While a BMB may or may not self-identify as a Christian, CMBs will generally do so. So all CMBs are BMBs, but not all BMBs are CMBs.

million” (Abdallah 2000) He reasoned that because of this, Muslims should support his efforts at *da’wah* in Africa.⁷

Another reason for overreporting, or at least using very generous guidelines in calculating conversions, is related to the recruitment of new missionaries. Important though funding may be for missionary agencies, if there are no missionaries offering their services, there is nothing to fund. For young people from Europe, the United States, or Korea who are probably well educated and have career options that are more profitable and less hazardous than foreign missions, success can be a good recruiter. When potential missionaries hear about a great number of converts in a given place, they may be more likely to move to the mission field.

Regarding terminology, it is important to examine carefully what exactly is being claimed in different kinds of literature. For example, if one reads that 50,000 people somewhere have made a “decision for Christ,” this does not mean that they are all necessarily attending a church, reading the Bible, or praying, much less that they have been baptized. It generally means that during some sort of encounter with a Christian person (or website) these individuals, in some form, usually a short extemporaneous prayer, accepted Jesus as their “Lord and Savior” and asked God to forgive them their sins. This does not mean that they fully understood what was happening or that what they actually felt that they were doing was what the Christian had in mind. One Muslim related that she had said this prayer as a matter of courtesy to her Christian friend with the understanding that since Muslims already accept the Prophet Jesus, there was nothing un-Islamic about it. All of these realities are implicit in the phrase “decision for Christ.” While the missionaries’ goal may well be to see the person become active in a local church and mature spiritually, that is not necessarily what happens after someone merely “decides for Christ.”

A slightly more helpful measure is baptisms. Because baptism normally requires commitment to a local church and a period of prebaptismal training, it is more likely that the person who is baptized is making a serious commitment to the new religion. But even with baptism, we find a specific problem in relation to BMBs, which Ripken and Strickler (2006: 6), who interviewed hundreds of ex-Muslims, explain:

The interviews also reveal that most MBBs, within five years of their declaration of faith in Christ (regardless of whatever process they have been a part of), have been baptized and re-baptized three to five times. In countries where missionaries representing different agencies are beginning to partner and share statistics, it is clear that the number of annual baptisms of MBBs is significantly inflated as MBBs are baptized time and time again within different mission bodies.

⁷ *Da’wah* is the act of calling people, whether non-Muslims or lax Muslims, to Islam.

We have seen a variation of this with regard to the Iranian churches in the United Kingdom for legal reasons. Someone who was baptized at a home church in Iran often cannot get a baptismal certificate from the pastor there, as the home church exists illegally and cannot create such documents. Therefore the person must be rebaptized in the United Kingdom, where a church can issue a baptismal certificate, which can then serve as physical proof to the Home Office that the person has in fact been baptized and is thus no longer Muslim but Christian. Such documentation is often important for the government in determining whether or not to grant the person refugee or asylum status. This should not be interpreted as an effort at bolstering numbers of claimed converts; it is simply addressing a difficult situation in a pragmatic manner. Baptism may also be readministered because of differences in practice (immersion versus sprinkling). In spite of all these limitations, “baptism is in fact a rather rough index of who is and isn’t a Christian” (Cooper 2006: 389). So baptism, while still problematic, appears to be somewhat more reliable than “decisions for Christ.” In sum, we acknowledge the ambiguity of the term “believer” when it is used to mean an adherent of the Christian faith.

However, there is also the real possibility of underreporting. This commonly occurs in public forums that are likely to be read by local Muslims. Using the lowest possible estimation—or indeed one below that—is considered to be a way of maintaining safety, especially in countries where the government actively punishes apostates or turns a blind eye while the person’s family is permitted or encouraged to administer punishment. Underreporting is also done by political and religious leaders. “[C]onversion ranks among the most destabilizing activities in modern society, altering not only demographic patterns but also the characterization of belief as communally sanctioned assent to religious ideology” (Viswanathan 1998: xvi). Although Viswanathan was not speaking specifically of the Muslim world, her point is germane to our topic. So even when conversion is taking place in significant numbers, it is often considered to be in the best interest of society to ignore it, conceal it,⁸ or—when that is not possible—dismiss the number of converts as negligible or insignificant. This is again not meant to imply that such sources (newspapers, specifically) should not be used; rather, it is important to keep in mind that their reports call for a good deal of scrutiny.

⁸ Madany (2009: 51) cites an example of this in which the Algerian government allegedly claimed that the number of converts to Christianity was “a state secret.” Similarly, the Catholic Church in Kosovo, where substantial numbers of Muslims are converting, would not release specific numbers of baptisms to a journalist (*Economist* 2007).

FURTHER QUESTIONS: THE UNITED STATES, CATHOLICS, AND ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS

There is still the issue of double counting. Our figures attempt to take into account the reality that BMBs emigrate from many countries, especially those where persecution related to leaving Islam exists. Given that many BMBs migrate from their native countries to countries in the West where they are free to live as Christians, what steps have we taken to ensure that we have not counted a BMB in the native country and then a second time in a country in the West?

A good example to begin with is the United States, since it is the third most populous country in the world and a key destination of BMBs fleeing persecution. Following is breakdown of the figures from and information about the United States:

1. The United States and Canada are the preferred destinations for harassed BMBs.
2. These BMBs are almost all Protestants (and almost all of these are evangelicals), with a total of 377,000 BMBs, broken out as follows:
 - a. There are five million Arabs in the United States, two-thirds of them Christian in background and possibly 180,000 BMBs. These come especially from Egypt and Palestine and increasingly from Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Syria.
 - b. There are one to two million Iranians in the United States, of whom we estimate about 130,000 to be BMBs. Worldwide, we estimate 180,000 Iranian BMBs in the West and Middle East and between 100,00 and 500,000 in Iran.
 - c. Other Muslim peoples (50+) yield a further 67,000 BMBs.
3. We can make only a rough estimate of 60,000 Catholic BMBs.
4. We estimate 40,000 Orthodox Christians.

This yields a total of possibly 477,000 BMBs, plus or minus 100,000, in the United States. This figure has been carefully tested through the *Operation World* database and the *World Christian Encyclopedia* ethnolinguistic groups with a majority of Muslims in the United States

Another question involves the number of converts to Orthodox and Catholic Christianity. Catholics have seen a trickle of former Muslims becoming Catholics in a number of countries, especially in the West and Africa, but numbers of such converts are not easily obtainable and are generally anecdotal. It is likely that the majority of these would be in Nigeria. There are a few countries where this has been more significant. For instance, Muslims of North Africa (especially those of Kabyle origin) were deeply affected by the humble courage and tactful witness of the White Fathers in the Atlas Mountains, who respected the inhabitants' language and culture. As a result, there could be a significant proportion of Catholic BMBs both in the Maghreb and in France. However, on-the-ground research in

Tunisia carried out in 2014 indicated that at the time, there were fewer than ten Catholic converts in the country and no Orthodox converts at all.

There are allegations of hundreds of converts per year to Catholicism in Europe, especially for the sake of marriage. The same has been seen in the Levant because so many of the Catholics there are Uniates of various streams and generally represent a somewhat defensive, if ancient, Christian culture that is not necessarily welcoming to Muslim seekers.

Orthodox Christian churches have not generally been proactive in missions or focused on winning Muslims. We do not have any definite information for more than a few countries. Our reckoning is that there are very few BMBs in Orthodox churches except where there is great freedom of religion (the United States and Canada) or where an Orthodox Church has a strong political and cultural presence and is not too ethnocentric to incorporate converts from Muslim minority peoples. The only Middle Eastern country where there have been a number of conversions of Muslims to Orthodox Christianity is Egypt, but this is both illegal and sensitive, and most converts have had to flee the country. Muslims and Orthodox Christians claim that former Muslims in Russia who now consider themselves to be Orthodox Christians number between 2 and 2.5 million.⁹ Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and establishment of the independence of Georgia, a unique change has occurred in the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, a region of Georgia on the border with Turkey. In 1991, 75 percent of Adjarians in Georgia were Muslims. Today, they are about 75 percent Orthodox Christian, of about 200,000 individuals as counted in the censuses of 1991 and 2011. Much of this change likely represents a return to the faith of their forefathers who were converted to Islam by the Ottomans.¹⁰

In response to the difficulties inherent in these numbers, we will use footnotes strategically in our research results to indicate where there may be substantial numbers of Catholic or Orthodox converts. Altogether, though, conversion to evangelical Christianity is the overwhelming norm around the world.

EXAMPLES OF GROWTH AND POSSIBLE REASONS

In 1960, there were very few known BMBs, and Christians made relatively little effort to communicate the Gospel effectively to Muslim communities. To many Christians, Muslims were just too difficult to reach, and the prevailing attitude was rather to concentrate on the many responsive populations in the mission fields.

⁹ wikiislam.net/wiki/Muslim_Statistics_-_Population#Russia.

¹⁰ journeytoorthodoxy.com/2013/09/18/mysterious-mass-conversion-from-islam-to-christianity-in-georgia.

In Indonesia, a great number of new converts to Christianity occurred among the non-Muslim peoples of Indonesia and to an extent among the “folk” Muslim East Javanese. The failed Communist coup of 1965, the subsequent massacres of supposed supporters of that coup by Muslims, and legislation that required all Indonesians to sign up for one of the five official religions of the country led to a huge turning to the Christian churches for refuge and engendered disgust for the cruelties perpetrated in the name of Islam (Willis 1977).

In Turkey, when missionaries arrived in the 1960s, there were then estimated to be just ten or so BMBs in the whole country. Today, there are possibly 4,000 to 6,000 BMBs in 100 Turkish-speaking Christian church groups. The translation of Scripture into contemporary Turkish and then its dissemination appear to have played a central role in this growth.¹¹

In Iran, at the time of the 1979 revolution, there were estimated to be fewer than 500 BMBs in the country, and there was little interest in the Gospel or in reading the Bible. The harshness of the Islamic regime of the ayatollahs changed this. There has been a large conversion movement, a massive network of underground churches has come into being in Iran, and a Bible has become one of the most desirable possessions. This wave of conversions has taken place not only within the country, but also among the three million people who have fled or emigrated from Iran.¹² There may be over half a million BMBs among Iranians today.

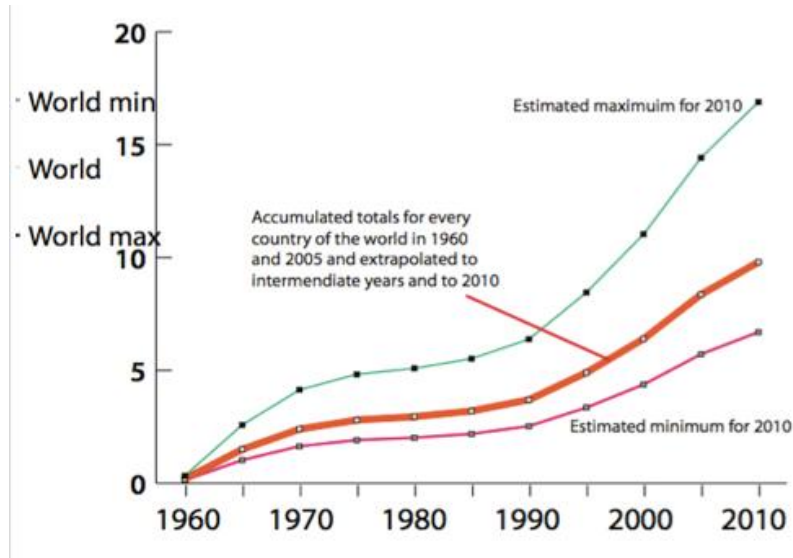
One missionary went to a relatively open country in the Middle East some three decades ago. He asked many people, “How do you disciple Muslims?” He received little help; it was not happening. Since then, there have been some 5,000 or more conversions. The implication is that Christians are thinking critically about how to communicate their message to Muslims in a way that will be more comprehensible in the local cultural and religious context.

In light of the preceding information, our starting point for the number of BMBs in Figure 1 was not difficult to determine. We constructed an annotated spreadsheet of every country, with sources where possible and with estimates covering this period. This clearly shows an increase from fewer than 200,000 BMBs globally in 1960 to nearly ten million today. We also estimated a maximum value and a minimum value for each country for 2010 and assumed, for the sake of the research, that this was proportionately applicable to each estimated point back to 1960. In other words, the figures cannot be precise. For instance, what researcher can really count the secret believers in a country such as Saudi Arabia?

¹¹ For more on Turkey, see Bultema (2010).

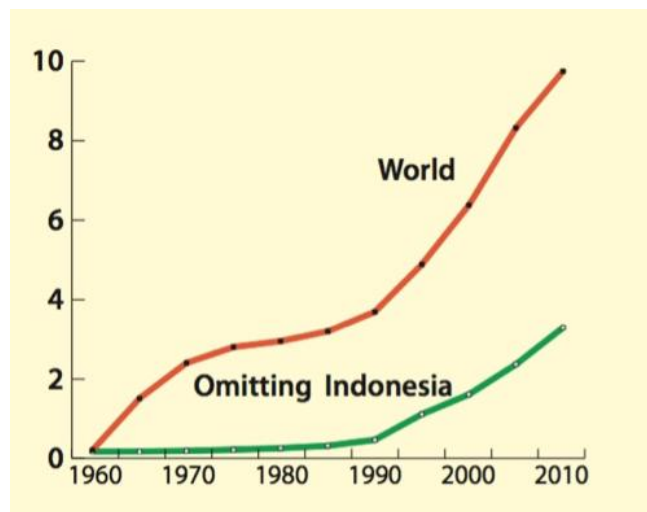
¹² For an example of what Iranian diaspora Christianity looks like, see Miller (2012, 2014).

Figure 1: Estimate for Believers in Christ from a Muslim Background: 1960–2010



The extraordinary wave of conversions in Indonesia distorts the graph in Figure 1. Figure 2 shows the total from Figure 1 along with the result when the Indonesian statistics are excluded. This graph shows the later but remarkable, even exponential, growth of BMB numbers in the other countries of the world over the past thirty years.

Figure 2: Estimate for Believers in Christ from a Muslim Background, Excluding Indonesia: 1960–2010



How has this come about? There are many contributing factors. When a number of converts and Christian ministers working among Muslims were asked for their opinions on why the increase in conversions had taken place, the following answers were salient:¹³

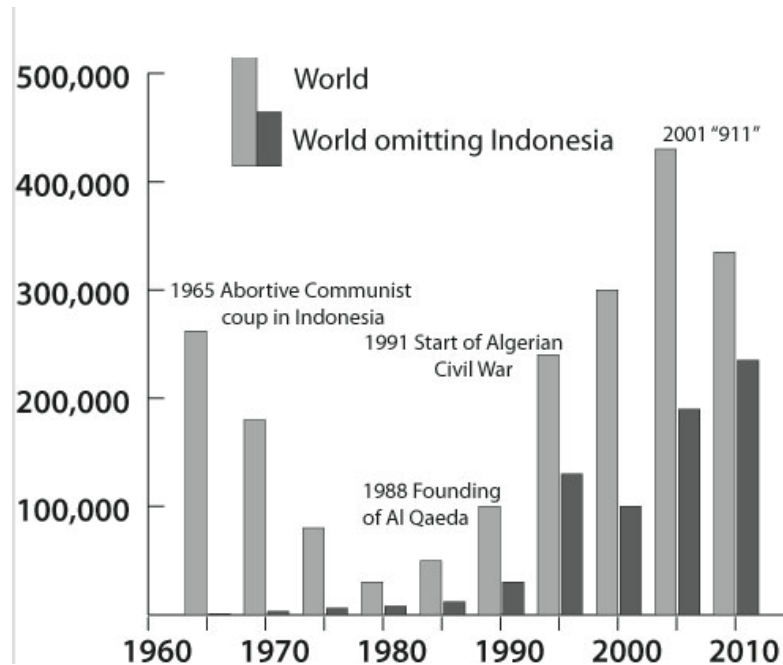
1. The massive increase in prayer for the Muslim world and the increase in the information to pray informatively.
2. A far greater involvement of Christian outreach. For many years, the number of missionaries serving in a specifically Muslim context was small, but the total has grown to over 16,000 missionaries who are known to have been sent out by congregations around the world and untold thousands more who have gone as “tent-makers,” that is, people who support themselves through secular work done in the mission field rather than being funded by churches.¹⁴
3. Globalization has forced change on the Muslim world and has exposed many people to new ideas through interactions in their daily lives and by means of radio, satellite TV, and the Internet. Among the many effects of globalization has been increased migration to countries where people have greater freedom to explore and even embrace the Christian faith.
4. Social and political turmoil in the Muslim world has caused many Muslims to question their faith. For some Muslims, this has led to embracing of a militant form of Islam that has further exacerbated the turmoil. For others, the result has been revulsion against the perceived harshness or tyranny of such forms of Islam. In any case, it is extraordinary how the rate per five-year period of conversion of Muslims to become followers of Christ, shown in Figure 3, appears to coincide with certain traumatic events that have affected the Muslim world. If this link between militant Islamic rule and alienation from Islam has validity, then any growth of Islamist movements in the coming years could lead to a further increase in the number of BMBs.¹⁵ (The apparent dip for 2005–2010 is due more to a cautious extrapolation of 2005 data than to a verified decline in the rate of conversions.)

¹³ These are elaborated at some length in Chapter 3 of Duane Alexander Miller (2014).

¹⁴ The term “tentmaker” is a reference to St. Paul, who sometimes funded his own missionary work by using his secular skill as a tent-maker.

¹⁵ For more on alienation from Islam and other causes of apostasy, see Abu Daoud (2008).

Figure 3: Annual Global Increase in Believers in Christ from a Muslim Background: 1960–2010



Having examined some figures that attempt to communicate global BMB populations, let us now turn to a country-by-country list.

ESTIMATED NUMBERS OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST FROM A MUSLIM BACKGROUND

With all of the above warnings and caveats in mind, we list in Table 1 our research findings by country. Special attention should be paid to footnotes, which may contain important (and possibly divergent) information. The numbers that are presented in Table 1 are moderate estimates, that is, neither the minimum estimated number for each country nor the maximum.¹⁶

¹⁶ We can be contacted by e-mail if any researchers desire the spreadsheet, which contains a great deal of information that is not contained in this article.

Table 1: Estimates of BMBs by Continent and Country

Country	Estimated Number of BMBs
<i>Africa</i> ¹⁷	
Algeria	380,000
Benin	40,000
Burkina Faso	200,000
Burundi	2,200
Cameroon	90,000
Central African Republic	1,500
Egypt	14,000
Eritrea	2,000
Ethiopia	400,000 ¹⁸
Gambia	2,500
Ghana	50,000
Guinea	3,000
Guinea-Bissau	1,500
Ivory Coast	5,500
Kenya	70,000
Libya	1,500
Malawi	5,000
Mali	8,000
Morocco	3,000
Mozambique	4,000
Niger	4,500 ¹⁹
Nigeria	600,000 ²⁰
Rwanda	2,000
Senegal	1,800
Sierra Leone	2,000
South Africa	6,500
Sudan	30,000 ²¹
Tanzania	180,000

¹⁷ We have omitted countries with fewer than 1,000 estimated BMBs, with the exception of the Arabophone countries of North Africa.

¹⁸ Love (2000) has the same figure.

¹⁹ Audeoud (2009a, 2009b) reports a significant increase in the number of evangelical churches in Niger and indicates that the number of evangelicals is increasing at about 12 percent per year, considerably faster than the Muslim population. Given that the Catholic Church is also growing more quickly than the nation's population, it seems that significant numbers of Muslims are converting to Christianity. Therefore this figure may be somewhat low.

²⁰ Love (2000) has 500,000.

²¹ The information was gathered before the independence of South Sudan in 2011.

Togo	2,500
Tunisia	500 ²²
Uganda	35,000
<i>Europe</i>	
Albania	13,000 ²³
Austria	1,100
Belgium	1,300
Belorussia	1,300
Bosnia-Herzegovina	2,000
Bulgaria	45,000
Croatia	1,200
Denmark	4,000 ²⁴
France	12,000 ²⁵
Germany	15,000
Italy	1,200
Kosovo	2,000 ²⁶
Netherlands	4,500
Russia	10,000 ²⁷
Spain	2,200
Sweden	2,500
Switzerland	1,800
Ukraine	1,000
United Kingdom	25,000

²² Madany (2009) also has an estimate of 500.

²³ Love (2000) estimates over 6,000 believers.

²⁴ A contact who is a Lutheran pastor in Denmark and is active in ministry to Muslims estimated that as of 2010, there were around 7,000 to 8,000 converts in Denmark, mostly Iranians.

²⁵ This number may be low, considering anecdotal information about numerous mixed couples in which the Muslim spouse converts to Catholicism or the child of such a union converts. That Johnstone's contacts are evangelicals and would probably not consider a Roman Catholic to be a Christian believer may account for this. The same obtains for countries such as Italy and Spain. Ibn Warraq (2003: 99) writes of the French Catholic Church, "In the year 2000, 2,503 adults were baptized of which 9% were of Muslim origin; thus 225 apostasized in France alone in 2000." Zenit, a Catholic news agency, has a figure for 2008 of 150 to 200 Muslims converting to Catholicism (available at www.zenit.org/article-22229?l=english).

²⁶ In addition to common evangelical converts, Kosovo has substantial numbers of Muslim families converting to Roman Catholic Christianity (Bytici 2008).

²⁷ This number may be low, as the Russian Orthodox Church in some areas actively receives converts from Islam. Perhaps there is the same issue here as with Roman Catholic converts—they are not considered to be true Christian believers by Johnstone's sources or perhaps are simply unknown to them.

The Americas

Argentina	2,200
Brazil	2,200
Canada	43,000
Guyana	2,200 ²⁸
Suriname	1,100
United States	450,000 ²⁹

Asia³⁰

Afghanistan	3,300
Azerbaijan	3,000
Bahrain	1,650
Bangladesh	130,000 ³¹
Cambodia	1,100
China	4,000
China (Hong Kong)	4,500
Georgia	1,300
India	40,000
Indonesia	6,500,000 ³²
Iran	100,000 ³³
Iraq	1,500
Israel	300
Jordan	6,500
Kazakhstan	50,000 ³⁴
Kyrgyzstan	19,000 ³⁵
Kuwait	350 ³⁶

²⁸ Guyana is the most Muslim country in the Americas by percentage of population.

²⁹ Many ex-Muslims move to the United States if they are able to. The same thing can be said of Canada, Australia, Germany, and the United Kingdom, among other countries. These numbers include such individuals.

³⁰ Only countries with over 1,000 BMBs are listed, with the exception of countries in the Middle East. Russia is included under Europe.

³¹ Bangladesh is very contested. Love (2000) estimates 16,000 to 40,000 Christian believers. Even if the number of Christian believers grew quickly, it is difficult to reconcile the two estimates.

³² Willis (1977) estimated that beginning in the mid-1960s, around two million Muslims became Christians. This figure includes their children and the first converts, some of whom are now dead.

³³ The original figure that Johnstone had was 50,000, but that is almost certainly too low. Well-informed sources indicate 100,000 as a conservative estimate. For an account of the growth of Christianity in Iran after the Revolution of 1979, see Miller (2015).

³⁴ Love (2000) says that in 1992, there were 50 to 100 believers. As of 2000, he estimates over 5000.

³⁵ Radford (2010) gives an estimate of about 20,000.

³⁶ Some of the Gulf States, such as Kuwait and Qatar, are populated mostly by noncitizens. The figures here include the large migrant populations, not just citizens.

Lebanon	2,500
Malaysia	5,000
Myanmar (Burma)	1,500
Oman	200
Pakistan	5,500
Palestine (i.e., West Bank and Gaza)	200
Qatar	200
Saudi Arabia	60,000
Sri Lanka	1,000
Syria	2,000
Tajikistan	2,600
Turkey	4,500
United Arab Emirates	200
Uzbekistan	10,000
Yemen	400 ³⁷
<i>Oceania</i>	
Australia	20,000
New Zealand	1,500
<i>Round Numbers by Continent/Region</i>	
Asia	6,968,500
Africa	2,161,000
North America	493,000
Arab world	483,500
Europe	147,800
Pacific	21,600
Latin America	8,800

THE NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As researchers, we are mindful of the limitations and difficulties related to this work. Nonetheless, a beginning must be made somewhere, and we believe that this table of nations reflects the best estimates that can be made at the present time. A few final comments are in order, though. First, while most BMBs convert to some form of evangelical or charismatic Christianity, there are pockets of converts to Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity in various places. As we acknowledged above, more precise numbers are needed for these BMBs. Second, changes are always taking place. New movements are born, old movements sometimes deteriorate, BMBs migrate, and so on. For example, the information in this article

³⁷ Knowledgeable sources of ours place this figure somewhere between 300 and 500.

was gathered before the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011. Has this war resulted in BMBs leaving as refugees or being killed? Or has disappointment with militant, reformist Islam led to more conversions, or—as is most likely—both? Ever-changing political and cultural situations mean that information like this needs to be continually gathered and reassessed. If enough new information is gathered, perhaps a revised BMB census will be in order.

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