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## **Are there 300 million, 600 million or 900 million Evangelicals? The politics of defining of Global Evangelicalism**

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*A Working Paper*



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## **Are there 300 million, 600 million or 900 million Evangelicals? The politics of defining of Global Evangelicalism**

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*THOMAS SCHIRRMACHER*

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Menschenhandel und Korruption einsetzt, und dabei den größten Teil der Erde bereist hat. Er ist zudem Stellvertretender Generalsekretär (für Theologie, zwischenkirchliche und interreligiöse Beziehungen, Religionsfreiheit) der Weltweiten Evangelischen Allianz (WEA), die 600 Mio. Protestanten vertritt. Er gilt als einer der Architekten des ersten und bisher einzigen Dokumentes, das 2011 der Vatikan, der Ökumenische Rat der Kirchen und WEA und damit fast die gesamte Weltchristenheit gemeinsam unterzeichnet haben, „Christliches Zeugnis in einer multireligiösen Welt“ über den Dialog der Religionen.

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## Are there 300 million, 600 million or 900 million Evangelicals? The politics of defining of Global Evangelicalism

### A Working Paper

*This working paper needs further research and the author gladly receives feedback, further information and links to research*

#### Abbreviations

OW = Jason Mandryk (ed.). *Operation World. Biblica: Colorado Springs (CO), 2010, 7th ed.* <http://www.operationworld.org>

SGC = Todd Johnson et al., “Status of Global Christianity” published annually in the first issue each year of the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*; e.g. for 2018 see <http://www.gordonconwell.edu/ockenga/research/documents/StatusofGlobalChristianity2018.pdf>

Identical figures in:

WCD: World Christian Database, Brill: Leiden, <https://www.worldchristiandatabase.org>

#### Summary

The annual “Status of Global Christianity” report (SGC) by Todd Johnson, which is also incorporated in the World Christian Database, shows the number of Evangelicals worldwide dropping to 350 million. Normally a larger number is given. The World Evangelical Alliance claims to represent the interests of 600 million “Evangelicals”. What is going on here?

The main issue is that some researchers are treating Pentecostals, Independents, and Evangelicals as separate categories—you can be only one of the three. But in reality, nearly all Pentecostals hold to the core truths of evangelicalism, a development that is accelerating with the growth of Pentecostal engagement in academic theology. And a large number of Independents are also evangelical in their faith commitment, regardless of whether they refer to themselves

as such. Many Christians belong to all three boxes at the same time, as they are Evangelical, Pentecostal and Independent.

#### Introduction

Among the many contemporary problems with the use of the term evangelical, the biggest one concerns the number of Evangelicals in the world today. Are there about 300 to 400 million—the estimated number of people who call themselves Evangelicals according to the annual “Status of Global Christianity” (SGC) report? Or are there 600 million, the approximate number of people who are Evangelical by theology, whether they use the term or not, according to Operation World? Or are there 900 million, which I would calculate to be the combined total number of Evangelicals, Pentecostals and Independents with partly evangelical or pentecostal orientation?

Researchers cannot just stay out of the debate over the size of evangelicalism while giving the impression that their categories are more scientific or more valid than those of others. As Calvin College political science professor Corwin Smidt said in this context in 2008, “The choice of one’s definitional approach has important consequences with regard to one’s resultant findings.”<sup>1</sup>

As an interesting and very significant comparison case, the concept of modern Hinduism did not exist until the British colonial rulers came to India. For statistical reasons, they took all the diverse and mostly unconnected religious systems of India that never constituted an easily identifiable major religion like Christianity or Islam and put them in one box. By doing so, they gradually caused the people of India to believe that Hinduism is one interconnected religion in many forms, and today modern Hin-

<sup>1</sup> Corwin Smidt, “The Measurement of Evangelicals,” <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2008/08/29/the-measurement-of-evangelicals/>:

du nationalists (or supporters of “Hindutva”), like the present Prime Minister of India, claim that India belongs to the Hindu gods.

The discussion also hinges on whether we roughly equate the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) with the evangelical community or whether we acknowledge the fact that many members of the WEA’s national alliances (e.g. in the USA or Germany) do not necessarily like to use the term *Evangelical*. Many of those whom the WEA counts in its rows describe themselves as connected to pentecostal, charismatic and independent communities rather than to a specific idea of evangelicalism. Membership in a national alliance does not depend on one view of a certain word, but whether one wants to be part of the broad communion of likeminded Christians.

The term *Evangelical* and its equivalents, along with its translations into different languages, have many different connotations around the world or among the different Protestant confessions and denominations, as well in the different countries and regions. Moreover, the term can be used positively, neutrally, or negatively.

In Switzerland or Colombia, it is generally used for the so-called free churches. In Switzerland, virtually all Protestants churches other than the Reformed former state church are members of the Swiss Evangelical Alliance.

In Turkey, it means the Protestants generally, since there are very few non-Evangelical Protestants. In Albania, *Evangelical* means Pentecostal or Charismatic, since almost all the people of Evangelical faith in Albania fall into these categories.

In Germany, the media use the term for politically conservative Protestants in the USA. As a result, mainstream Evangelicals in Germany often describe themselves as “Allianz-Evangelikale,” or members of the national Evangelical Alliance.

In many countries, two uses of the term co-exist. In Germany, people often refer to an evangelical wing of the Catholic Church, meaning Catholics who emphasize reading the Bible, a personal relationship with Jesus, personal evangelism, world mission, and good relations with Evangelicals. So, the term can refer to either evangelical Protestants or “evangelical Catholics”! But, of course, these “evangelical Catholics” are not questioning major Catholic

doctrines. On the other hand, in Italy or Spain many Evangelicals see the application of the adjective “evangelical” to any Catholics as syncretism and as a personal attack on their identity.

There are surely further definitions and usages in other countries besides those mentioned above. (And I do not insist that I am totally right when describing the usages in the countries above, especially in languages other than my mother tongue. But my main point is indisputable: around the world, there are many diverse definitions of the term “Evangelical” used by the media.)

### The number of Evangelicals and the World Evangelical Alliance

This matter of definition is of great importance to the World Evangelical Alliance, which claims to represent the interests of 600 million Evangelical Christians worldwide.

SGC reports that there were 350 million Evangelicals in the world as of 2018, far less than the figure of 550 million estimated by Operation World (which for 2018 probably would be 600 to 650 million). If one follows the SGC numbers, the WEA might have as many non-Evangelical as Evangelical members in the churches that belong to the WEA’s national alliances.

Who cares? After all, the WEA and its adherents are bound together by the “evangelion”, i.e. the gospel, not by some term or definition. What counts for the World Evangelical Alliance are the people affiliated with the churches and networks that are members of evangelical alliances around the globe and those who feel represented by WEA. Whether they call themselves Evangelicals or not, and whether researchers categorize them as Evangelicals or in some other category such as Independents or Pentecostals, is not the WEA’s first interest.

Among the member churches of national alliances who form the WEA, we can distinguish three groups:

- (1) those churches that are members of national evangelical alliances and want their national and regional alliances and the WEA to speak for them;

- (2) those churches that are members for the purpose of better networking and cooperation, but do not see the WEA as speaking for them; and
- (3) those Christians worldwide who are not members of any body connected with the WEA and its family of alliances, yet who stand with the WEA when we address specific matters. For example, we often work together with the Southern Baptist Convention on a global level on abortion or to defend a conservative view of biblical scholarship, and they often use our contacts, even though they are not a member of the National Association of Evangelicals in the USA. Also, there is a close relationship between the WEA and the non-registered Protestant churches in China, but officially they cannot associate with the WEA.

These complications help to explain why all the estimates can be reasonably accurate—the 300 million figure from SGC, the 550/600 million from OW, and the 900 million who are in some sense part of a worldwide fellowship of Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Independents and renewal movements.

### **There are no neutral definitions in research; ever-changing terms and definitions are part of church politics**

In reading their articles and books for decades, I have found that the researchers at SGC often argue and act as if the categories for counting members of religious groups or Christian movements are in some sense neutral and firmly established. Yet in the end, every major researcher in the field has his or her own categories. All categories contain an intrinsic element of evaluation, judgment, or even church politics. And the categories themselves or the numbers derived by using a certain approach can influence the future of the church. We

should also note that these sets of categories generally arise in the USA, thanks to the financial strength of American evangelicalism and of American academic institutions. Sometimes it feels to the rest of us like a type of intellectual colonialism within our own spiritual community.

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Let's look at some examples of how the SGC,<sup>2</sup> the whole World Christian Database and the earlier World Christian Encyclopedia have changed their terms with far-reaching consequences, even though before the change the older categories were defended vigorously. In the 1990s, the category of "Great Commission Christians" was introduced. The SGC for 2014 listed 309,701,000 Evangelicals (line 25), 694,592,000 "Great Commission Christians" (line 26) and 631,230,000 "Pentecostals/Charismatics/Neocharismatics" (line 27).

In 2015 the term "Great Commission Christians" was dropped, representing a major shift in theological evaluation of worldwide Christianity. What about all the arguments given in a strong tone, how unavoidable this category was? The authors wrote, "Notably, the 'Great Commission Christians' concept has been retired. This category, introduced in the early 1990s, was used by many agencies to express ecumenism in mission. While tracking Christians within each tradition who are active in mission and evangelism is valid, we have not found a way to corroborate these particular estimates with surveys and poll data."<sup>3</sup> This is exactly what critics said from the beginning. They questioned how one could distinguish the categories of Great Commission Christians and Evangelicals. After all, some of us wonder how anyone can be an Evangelical without endorsing the Great Commission, which as Evangelicals per se should fall into this category beside other groups.

<sup>2</sup> "Status of Global Christianity, 2016, in the Context 1900-2050", (yearly under) <http://www.gordonconwell.edu/resources/documents/statusofglobalmission.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> "Status of Global Christianity, 2015, in the Context 1900-2050", (yearly under) <http://www.gordonconwell.edu/resources/documents/statusofglobalmission.pdf>, archive: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308361629\\_Status\\_of\\_Global\\_Christianity\\_2015\\_in\\_the\\_Context\\_of\\_1900-2050](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308361629_Status_of_Global_Christianity_2015_in_the_Context_of_1900-2050)

In 2014, we were also informed, that the SGC no longer would speak of “waves”. Instead, Pentecostals, Charismatics and Independent Charismatics (line 27) were now all labelled together in one category as “Renewalists”.<sup>4</sup>

The category of Independents was introduced earlier. Now a large portion of what Operation World sees as Evangelicals are put into the Independent category, thus giving the impression, that the number of Evangelicals is shrinking. We will discuss the concept of Independents further below.

I am quite sure that in the near future the majority of Evangelicals will be Independents, as the number of churches and Christians who hold evangelical views but attend churches not associated with historic Western denominations and categories is exploding. But how one treats Independents depends on how one views evangelicalism.

### SGC’s definition 1

Gina Zurlo, who was at that time Todd Johnson’s assistant, distinguished three ways of counting Evangelicals: by denominational affiliation, self-identification or theology.<sup>5</sup> Zurlo argued strongly, along with Johnson, for the second definition. Thus she found only 15 million Evangelicals in China and virtually none among African American Christians in the US.

(Zurlo’s article is part of a book about the WEA, which states that the WEA represents 600 million Christians in its member churches. It is strange, that Zurlo does not take up the topic that according to her definition, half of the members of WEA are non-Evangelicals. It is equally strange that those in the same book, that speak about the 600 million Evangelicals, do not validate or defend their number.)

According to the SGC/WCD, in 2010 there were 15 million Evangelicals in China, whereas according to Operation World, China has the largest group of Evangelicals in a single country with 75 million as of 2010.

OW includes Afro-American Evangelicals in the USA; the SGC/WCD excludes them. For 2010, this resulted in a difference of 18.7 million Evangelicals. As Zurlo writes, “One example of significant denominational discrepancy is the African American population in the United States. African Americans are often excluded from sociological and political discussions of Evangelicalism because of the perception that Evangelicalism is a white phenomenon. In reality, many African American Christians generally adhere to the theological characteristics of historical Evangelicalism, which is why Operation World includes them in its figures for Evangelicals in the United States. Of the eight largest denominational discrepancies between Operation World and the World Christian Database, six are within predominantly African American traditions. Together, these six denominations add another 18.7 million individuals in the United States that Operation World considers Evangelical but the World Christian Database does not.”<sup>6</sup>

Corwin Smidt comments:

“Finally, while generally known but frequently forgotten, it should be noted in conclusion that the choice of one’s definitional approach has important consequences with regard to one’s resultant findings. For example, the estimated proportion of evangelical Protestants within American society varies considerably by the approach adopted. Roughly speaking, evangelical Protestants constitute about a quarter of the population when measured in terms of affiliation, about one-seventh when defined in terms of identification, and less than one-tenth of the population when specified in terms of Barna’s list of requirements. Similarly, the political characteristics of those falling within the evangelical Protestant category will vary greatly by the approach adopted. And, because many more African Americans will fall into an evangelical category when based on religious beliefs than when based on denominational affiliation or reli-

<sup>4</sup> Todd Johnson and Peter F. Crossing, “Christianity 2013: Renewalists and Faith and Migration”, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 38, no. 1 (2014): 32.

<sup>5</sup> Gina Zurlo, “Demographics of Global Evangelicalism”, in Brian Stiller et al. (ed.), *Evangelicals Around the World: A Global Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 34–47.

<sup>6</sup> Zurlo, “Demographics”, 41. Gina Zurlo. “Demographics of Global Evangelicalism”. p. 34-47 in: Brian Stiller et al. (ed.). *Evangelicals Around the World: A Global Handbook*. Thomas Nelson: Nashville (TN), 2015, p.41.

gious self-identification, the reported proportion of evangelicals voting Democratic in an election is far higher and the group less distinctive (and thus exhibiting lower explanatory power) than what is revealed when evangelicals are defined in terms of self-identification or religious affiliation.<sup>7</sup>

Operation World counts Evangelicals in a way that more closely aligns with how most Evangelicals themselves would try to do so, that is, by theological, confessional standards. Operation World tries to count those who hold to the core of an Evangelical faith, regardless of whether they use the term “Evangelical” or not. The SGC only counts those as Evangelicals, that call themselves Evangelicals.

## SGC’s definition 2

Along with Catholic and Orthodox Christians, the “Status of Global Christianity, 2018” article by Todd Johnson lists the following three Christian groups: Protestants (including Anglicans) 567,185,000, Independents 446,434,000, Unaffiliated Christians 108,025,000 (Graphic 1).

And with some overlap with the former categories (as in the end there are fewer than a billion Christians who are neither Catholic nor Orthodox): (Self-identified) Evangelicals 341,904,000, Pentecostals/Charismatics 669,177,000 (Graphic 2).

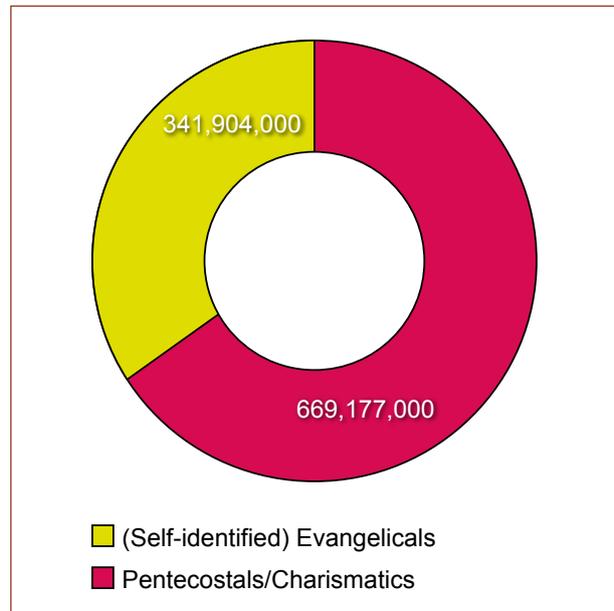
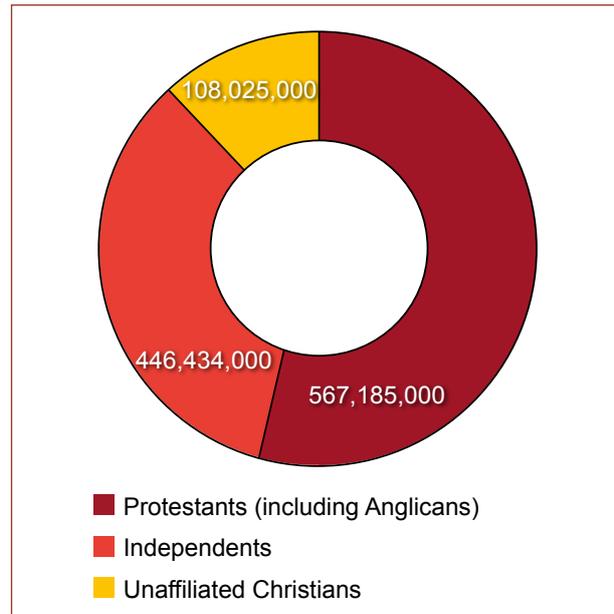
(The SGC obviously does not see the vast majority of Evangelicals and Pentecostals as Protestants, as it only counts 567 million Protestants altogether.)

The churches and networks of the national alliances that form the WEA are somewhere in this roughly 1 billion people.

Thus we need to discuss the relationship between Evangelicals and Pentecostals and then the relationship between Evangelicals and Independents.

## Are Pentecostals Evangelicals?

All those problems are mirrored in the question whether Pentecostals or at least the majority of them are Evangelicals or not. Statisticians like Todd Johnson keep them clearly separate.



Operation World tries to keep them apart, but refers to an unknown amount of overlapping. (I have been responsible for the German translation of Operation World since 1982, so I know the discussion over decades and the matter remains unresolved.)

Recently I asked several top Pentecostal leaders from several continents how they thought they should be classified. The typical reaction was something like “What other than Evangelical-

<sup>7</sup> Corwin Smidt, “The Measurement of Evangelicals”, August 29, 2008, <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2008/08/29/the-measurement-of-evangelicals/>.

cals should Pentecostals be?” This is not a representative sample or a collection of official statements, but I think it is illustrative.

From what I know, the Assemblies of God, the largest Pentecostal denomination globally, are members of national alliances affiliated with the WEA, wherever both the Assemblies and a national alliance are operating.

A small number of national Pentecostal churches have connections to the World Council of Churches, but that does not contradict the claim that they are Evangelicals. Neither the WEA nor the WCC has ever stated that one cannot be a member of both organizations.

Whether one counts Pentecostals as Evangelicals or puts them in separate categories is not a self-evident issue, but has a lot to do with one’s theological positions and goals. Statisticians are not neutral observers, and their categories—whether they like or not—are part of church politics.

There are Pentecostal churches in the World Council of Churches, as already noted, and some Pentecostal churches are not members of any international ecumenical body, but the largest number of Pentecostals belong to the WEA through churches that are members of national evangelical alliances.

OW (2010) had 545,886,818 Evangelicals (abbreviated by OW as E), which includes 178,082,864 Pentecostals (P), and it also gives a figure of 426,097,092 Charismatics (C). But it does not say to what extent E/P on one hand and C on the other hand overlap in actual numbers. That is because they themselves have no idea. They just write, “Note that all Pentecostals are both evangelical and charismatic and are P or I. Most evangelicals are P, Independents (I) or Anglicans (A), and smaller numbers are Catholics (C) or Orthodox (O). Most charismatics in P, I or A are evangelicals; much less so among C.”<sup>8</sup>

The Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project<sup>9</sup> reported in 2014 that 16% of the 35.4 million Hispanics in the USA are Evangelicals; that is much higher than the number the SGC and OW give for the same group.<sup>10</sup> They include Pentecostals among Evangelicals. I assume further that Pew counts Charismatics as Pentecostals.

But at other times, Pew has counted Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Charismatics in two categories, such as in the following table from 2011.

## Christians by Movement

Movements	Estimated number	Percentage of total worldpopulation	Percentage of world Christian population
Pentecostal	279,000,000	4.0%	12.8%
Charismatic	304,990,000	4.4	14.0
<b>Pentecostal and Charismatic together</b>	<b>584,080,000</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>26.7</b>
Evangelical	285,480,000	4.1	13.1

Source: Center for the Study of Global Christianity. Pentecostals and charismatics are mutually exclusive categories. They overlap, however, with the evangelical category, and the three categories should not be added together. Many Christians do not identify with any of these movements. Population estimates are rounded to the ten thousands. Percentages are calculated from unrounded numbers. Pentecostal and charismatic figures may not add exactly due to rounding. Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life • Global Christianity, December 2011. (<https://www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity-exec/>)

<sup>8</sup> OW, p. 4 and the graph p. xxxi

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.pewforum.org>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.pewforum.org/2014/05/07/chapter-1-religion-affiliation-of-hispanics/>

*From my perspective, it is a mainly Western view that one can distinguish between Evangelicals, Independents, Pentecostals, and Charismatics. In Africa or India, it is often hard to distinguish between those groups and there are large overlaps and large grey areas between them.*

## Independents

This leads us to the relation of Evangelicals and Independents. What are Independents? The term is vague, but it heavily influences the statistics concerning Christianity and the number of Evangelicals.<sup>11</sup>

Pew writes, “The third group broadly defined as Protestants in this report is independent Christians. Independent Christians have developed ecclesial structures, beliefs and practices that are claimed to be independent of historic, organized Christianity. Independent Christians include denominations in sub-Saharan Africa that identify as independent from historically Protestant denominations, churches in China that are not affiliated with official religious associations and nondenominational churches in the United States.”<sup>12</sup> Pew furthermore offers the following clarification:

*“For the purposes of this report, denominations and independent churches identified by the Center for the Study of Global Christianity as having an overwhelming majority of congregations engaging in pentecostal practices are classified as pentecostal. In their own reports, however, CSGC classifies denominations and independent churches that have pervasive pentecostal practices*

*but are not considered historically pentecostal as charismatic. The CSGC classifications are designed to capture distinctions between historically pentecostal churches and denominations and newer religious institutions practicing pentecostalism. The classifications in the Pew Forum report, by contrast, are intended to capture differences between denominations and independent churches in which a majority of congregations engage in pentecostal practices (classified as belonging to the pentecostal movement) and those in which a minority of congregations engage in pentecostal practices (classified as belonging to the charismatic movement).”<sup>13</sup>*

The term “independent Christianity” can be very confusing. Robert S. Ellwood and Gregory D. Alles define it as “Christian churches that do not belong to a broader Christian institutional organization.”<sup>14</sup> In the USA, they say, the term “refers to churches that refuse to ally themselves with any denomination. For Africa it is either churches that broke away from Western mother churches, or churches “founded by African prophets or even messiahs”<sup>15</sup>.

Take an example. In a given city in Africa there are two Pentecostal churches. One is very African, independent, ever-changing, but belongs to the Assemblies of God and thus is counted as Protestants, as Pentecostals and perhaps as Evangelicals. Around the corner is a very traditional Pentecostal church in which the clergy wear robes, but because the church popped up by itself and belongs to no network, its members are counted as Independents.

<sup>11</sup> For different definitions see my review “The World’s Religions in Figures”. *International Journal for Religious Freedom* 6 (2013) 1/2: 251-253; *Evangelical Review of Theology* 39 (2015) 1: 91-92; Roswith Gerloff, Abraham Ako Akrong. „Independents, 1910 – 2010” p. 76-77 in: Todd M. Johnson, Kenneth R. Ross (ed). *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910 - 2010*. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 2009; Graph “Independents by country 1910 and 2010” p. 77 in; Todd M. Johnson, Kenneth R. Ross (ed). *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910 - 2010*. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 2009; “Christianity 2013: Renewalist and Faith and Migration”. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 37 (2013) 1: 32

<sup>12</sup> “Christian Traditions”. <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity-traditions/>, part of “Global Christianity – —A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World’s Christian Population”. 19.12.2011, <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity-exec/>

<sup>13</sup> *ibid* p. 95, footnote 25.

<sup>14</sup> “Christianity, Independent”, pp. 88–90 in Robert S. Ellwood and Gregory D. Alles. *The Encyclopedia of World Religions. Facts on File*: New York, 2007. p. 88.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 89.

The “Methodology of the World Christian Database”<sup>16</sup> defines Independents as “churches begun without reference to Western Christianity”. In that case, how are so many Independents in the USA? Did any so-called independent church in the USA get started “without reference to Western Christianity”? Or is the very fact, that they are “interdenominational” just a sign, that they come out of Western Christianity?

Many theologically conservative, evangelical member churches of national alliances have no official historic connection to an existing Christian denomination. So what? Probably those people will represent the majority of Evangelicals soon, as the example of China shows. Also, we have more and more interdenominational but still firmly evangelical church networks.

## China

Todd M. Johnson states in an article on Christianity in China<sup>17</sup> that the following confessional groups existed in China as of 2010: 24,721,000 Protestants, 75,342,000 Independents, 15,246,000 Evangelicals, 52,091,000 Pentecostals and 15,000,000 Catholics (and 10,000 Orthodox). For all Christians taken together, he estimates 107,956,000s, obviously there is a lot of overlap in his numbers. The number of Evangelicals is the same as in the World Christian Database, which reports 15.2 million.<sup>18</sup> For Johnson, then, Evangelicals represent 14% of all Christians in China, whereas Pentecostals represent 48%. Needless to say, recognizing most or all Pentecostals as Evangelicals would reshape these numbers considerably.

In contrast, OW counts 75,400,000 Evangelicals in China for 2010, or 70% of all Christians in China. If OW is right, China would be the country with the largest absolute number of Evangelicals. If Todd Johnson is right, Evangelicals play a minor role in China.

Gina Zurlo acknowledges the problem: “China is the most challenging country in terms of counting Evangelicals. Operation World reported 76.0 million Evangelicals in China as of 2010, while the World Christian Database reported only 15.2 million (a difference of 60.8 million). Despite the significant growth of the house church movement in China, no overtly Evangelical organization can be easily identified and tracked there. On the other hand, if all of the house churches in China suddenly joined the World Evangelical Alliance, a global Evangelical communion, then the World Christian Database would automatically consider all house church members Evangelical. Operation World, however, already considers most members of Chinese house churches Evangelical, based on Operation World’s assessment of their theological learnings. In many other churches in the global South it is difficult to apply the label Evangelical because of the historical and cultural context in which the movement was born.”<sup>19</sup>

Things could be even worse. In *The World’s Religions in Figures*<sup>20</sup> we find these numbers for China as of 2010: 58 million Protestants, 23 million members of the Three Self Patriotic Movement (the officially recognized churches), and 35% “independent Christians”. Evangelicals do not show up at all. Agreed, in China only independent Christians are left, since all Western churches were destroyed under Mao. But why should they not be evangelical at the same time?

## WEA membership?

If one defines Evangelicals by membership in the WEA, as Zurlo does in the passage quoted above (by stating that she would count the evangelical churches in China as Evangelicals, if they could become NEA members), one runs into two problems:

<sup>16</sup> [[http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org/wcd/about/WCD\\_Methodology.pdf](http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org/wcd/about/WCD_Methodology.pdf)]

<sup>17</sup> Todd M. Johnson, “Christianity in China in the Context of Global Christianity”, September 22, 2015, <http://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/articles/christianity-in-china-in-the-context-of-global-christianity>.

<sup>18</sup> Zurlo, “Demographics”, 41.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Todd M. Johnson and Brian J. Grim. *The World’s Religions in Figures: An Introduction to International Religious Demography* Malden: Chicester (UK) & Wiley-Blackwell: Malden (MA), 2013. p. 293

1. The national and regional alliances and thus WEA have historic, Pentecostal, and Independent churches as members who would hesitate to call themselves Evangelical or would not see this as their first or major description.
2. The church networks in China remain outside the WEA not by choice or because they are not Evangelicals, but because they cannot join for political reasons. Why should a non-Christian government be allowed to decide whether Christian believers are counted as Evangelicals?



### There Are Three Ways To Support The WEA Department Of Theological Concerns Financially

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WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

Department of Theological Concerns

# BULLETIN

WEA DTC BULLETIN IMPRINT

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## Journals and newsletters within the Department for Theological Concerns

Evangelical Review of Theology (quarterly)

<http://www.worldevangelicals.org/tc/>

Islam and Christianity (English and German)  
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<https://www.islaminstitut.de/en/category/publikationen/journal/>

Jahrbuch für Verfolgung und Diskriminierung  
von Christen [Yearbook on Persecution and  
Discrimination of Christians]

(German) [https://www.iirf.eu/journal-books/  
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International Journal of Religious Freedom  
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Jahrbuch für Religionsfreiheit [Yearbook on  
Religious Freedom] (German) [https://www.  
iirf.eu/journal-books/german-yearbooks/](https://www.iirf.eu/journal-books/german-yearbooks/)

### Digital only:

Theological News (quarterly)

[http://www.worldevangelicals.org/tc/  
publications/TN.htm](http://www.worldevangelicals.org/tc/publications/TN.htm)

Bonn Profiles (twice a week)

[https://www.bucer.org/resources/bonner-  
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Business & Ministry News (Business  
Coalition) (monthly) order from  
[business@worldidea.org](mailto:business@worldidea.org)

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The department is part of  
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Secretary General Bishop Efraim Tendero (Philippines)

The WEA Department of Theological Concerns  
is responsible for Theology

- Theological Education • Intrafaith: Churches
- Christian World Communion
- Interfaith: Interreligious Dialogue
- Islam • Religious Freedom • Persecution
- Christian Scholars • Research • Business and theology

The WEA Department of Theological Concerns  
consists of the following entities:

- Theological Commission
- ICETE (International Accreditation)
- Re-forma (Untrained Pastors Training)
- Office for Intrafaith and Interfaith Relations (OIFR)
- Religious Liberty Commission (RLC)
- International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF)
- International Institute for Islamic Studies (IIS)
- Business Coalition/Business and Theology
- Society of Christian Scholars
- Research Unit
- UN Bonn liaison office for interreligious dialogue