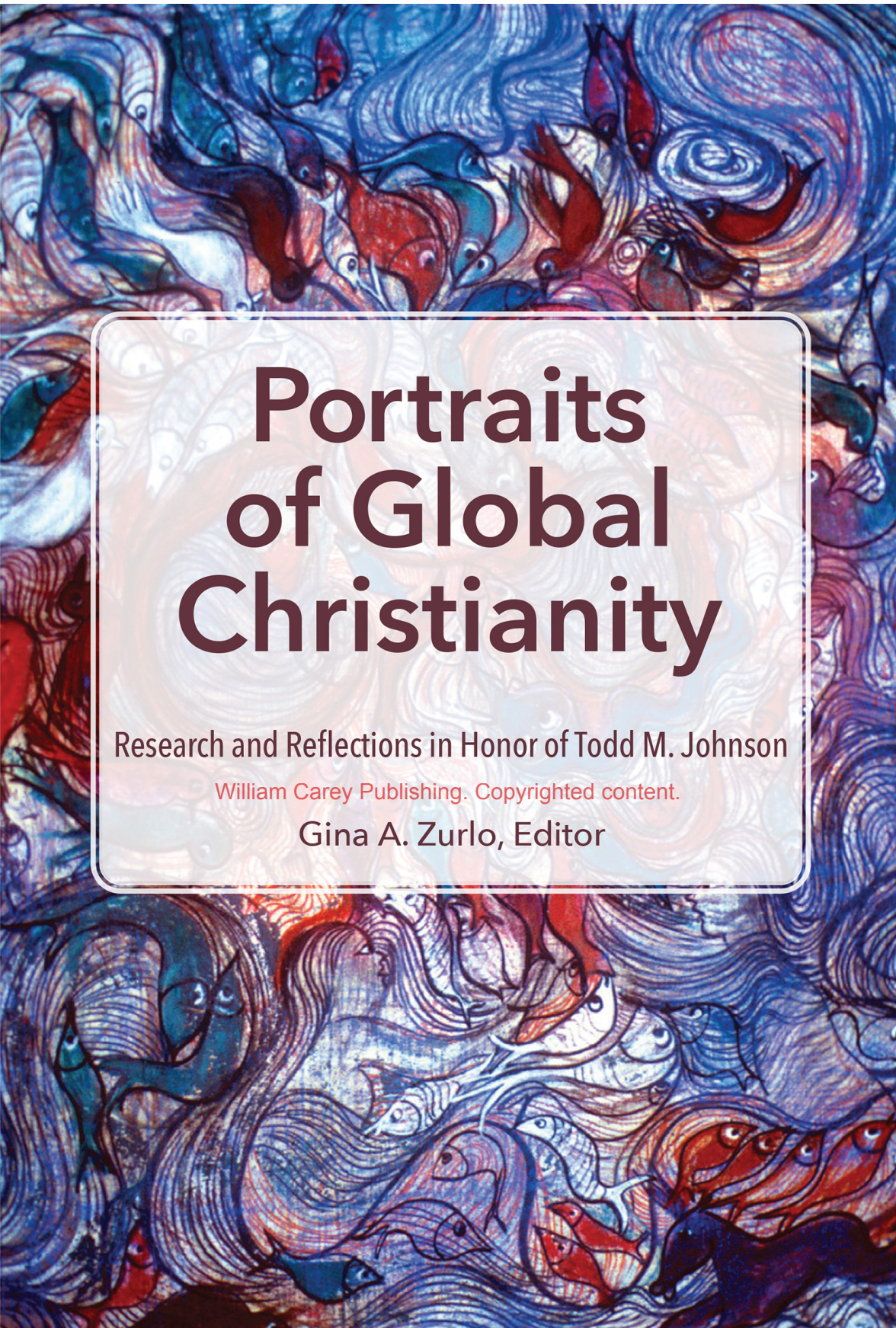


Portraits of Global Christianity

Research and Reflections in Honor of Todd M. Johnson

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Gina A. Zurlo, Editor

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Part I

Partnership in World Christianity and Mission Research



Nalini Jayasuriya (1927–2014), *Creation*, courtesy of the Overseas Ministries Study Center at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, USA.

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Chapter 1:
Trends in Global Christianity Through Design

Gina A. Zurlo and Peter F. Crossing

Sociologist Peter Berger (1929–2017) wrote the foreword to Todd Johnson and Brian Grim's methodological volume on religious demography, *The World's Religions in Figures: An Introduction to International Religious Demography*. In classic Berger fashion, he told a joke:

> As an old joke has it: as the lady said to the insect specialist after sitting next to him at a dinner party, during which he told her endlessly about his beloved insects—"This is very interesting, if you are interested in it."[1]

Quantitative data on religion has the propensity toward the same—it is interesting, if you are interested in it. Historically, number-crunching in religious communities took the form of counting heads via births, baptisms, and deaths, laying the foundation for what would become national censuses. Also, missionaries created population ledgers for the sake of evangelization, proto-social scientific discovery, and the creation of historical datasets. Over time, quantification became the gold standard for social scientific investigation, where human behavior could be described in terms of facts, figures, and discernable trends.

The structural origins of the *World Christian Database* (Brill) began in the 1960s with David Barrett's 10,000 IBM punch cards and 2,500 paper tapes to feed what he called his first "databank." The trajectory of the research legacy weaves in and out of advances in computing technology, beginning with the Wang 2200 WCS/30 C-6 minicomputer in 1978 at the hefty price tag of roughly $111,000 (around $394,000 today). The first *World Christian Encyclopedia* (Oxford University Press, 1982) partially took so long to complete (14 years) because of the book's intricate design with 700 photographs, 500 statistical tables, a full-color atlas, 15 different fonts, and hundreds of flags, maps, and line graphs. Most readers of the *Encyclopedia* were simply overwhelmed by the amount of data in the book, where Barrett suggested tables should be read with a ruler because of their massive width and small font size. For Barrett, and indeed for today, obtaining the best data was the most important part of the work, but what good is good data if it is communicated poorly? Layout, design,

1 Todd M. Johnson and Brian J. Grim, *The World's Religions in Figures: An Introduction to International Religious Demography* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), xxii.

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and the presentation of quantitative data has always been a critical feature of this kind of work to ensure the data are, well, interesting.

It is not natural for most people to get excited about databases, large tables full of numbers, and spreadsheets with many thousands of lines (present company excluded). Quantitative research on religion is far more interesting if it is presented in an accessible way to a broad audience. Creative design not only helps make data more palatable, but it also makes data come alive, reach more people, and tell new stories. This chapter journeys through the history of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity (CSGC) in a new way—through design. From the 1950s to today, David Barrett, Todd Johnson, and now Gina Zurlo and their team (Christopher Guidry, Brad Coon, Justin Long, Bryan Nicholson, Nana Bin, Amanda Perkins, and others) have been experimenting with new ways to show global Christian trends through diagrams, infographics, maps, charts, and graphs. This chapter is organized by decade, from the 1950s to the 2020s, and includes representative graphics from each to show the evolution of design and the communication of quantitative data on religion.

The CSGC's research agenda centers around three core pillars, which are illustrated throughout the designs presented in this chapter: ecumenical Christianity, world religions, and Christian activities.

1. **Ecumenical Christianity**. David Barrett was the first person to include all the world's Christians equally in a single book, with no theological or exclusionary boundaries among Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Latter-day Saints, or Jehovah's Witnesses. For example, Barrett was the first person to quantify newly formed African Independent Churches (24 million in 1980) in the *Encyclopedia*. As such, graphs that depict global Christianity have always been ecumenical and include all the world's Christians.

2. **World religions**. Barrett's *Encyclopedia* was also the first place to quantify adherents of every major world religion, including separate categories for atheists and agnostics. He was the first to estimate the size of non-religious populations worldwide (16.6% in 1980). In doing so, Barrett set the stage for considering Christianity in the context of other world religions, a major feature of the CSGC's research over time. Today, the CSGC tracks 18 categories of religion and non-religion (in order of size in 2020): Christians, Muslims, Hindus, agnostics, Buddhists, Chinese folk-religionists, ethnic religionists, atheists, New religionists, Sikhs, Jews, Spiritists, Daoists, Confucianists, Baha'is, Jains, Shintoists, and Zoroastrians.

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3. **Christian activities**. The CSGC has always tracked trends in activities of Christians worldwide, including missionary sending and receiving, national workers, Bible translation and distribution, evangelization (gospel access), martyrdom, and ecclesiastical crime. Also included here are analyses of Christianity by city, province, and ethnolinguistic people groups.

Design Through the Decades

1950s

From 1952–1954, David Barrett was a Master of Divinity student at Ridley Hall, University of Cambridge. Ridley Hall opened in 1882 as a training center for Evangelicals in Church of England ministry, and many Ridleians, like Barrett, served abroad as missionaries with the Church Missionary Society.[2] He took courses in Old and New Testament, systematic theology, philosophy of religion, psychology, Christian ethics, Anglican ordination, church history, ministry, worship, and evangelism. The pursuit of theological training at Ridley involved a quest for deep faith and understanding, self-awareness through prayer, discernment toward serving in overseas mission, and the importance of Christian community. In the 1950s, Ridley trained students to be foremost a Christian, able to cooperate across Christian traditions. A high proportion of Ridley men (the school was mostly single, middle-class White men) became cross-cultural missionaries.[3]

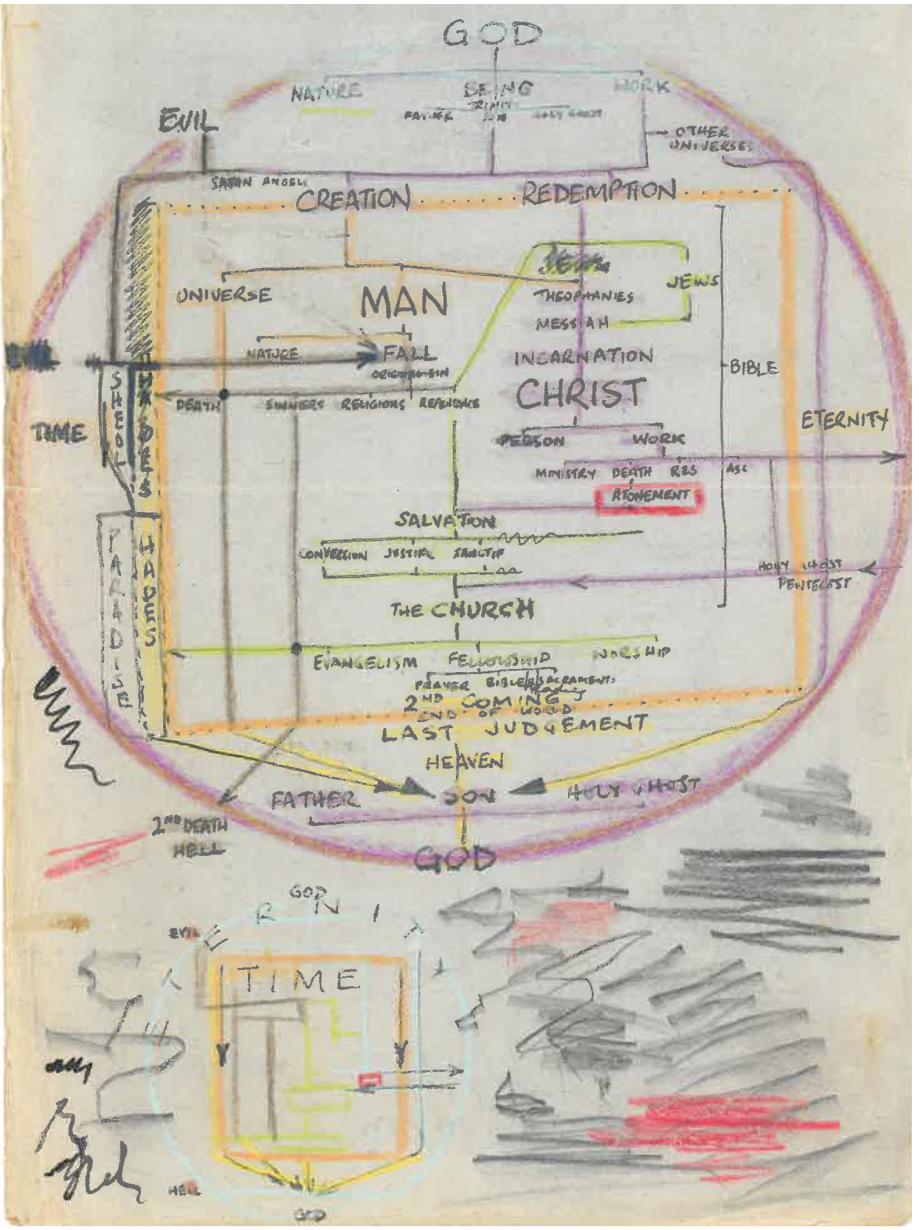
In 1953, Barrett created a draft of his first global diagram, which was a theological representation of the drama of God (figure 1). This graph illustrates two important parts of what became his career in quantifying religion. First, as an aspiring missionary, Barrett was invested in understanding systematic theology, God's salvific plan for the world, and the theological concepts of atonement, sin, and redemption. Part of Barrett's motivation for quantifying every religion and Christian denomination was evangelistic. Throughout church history, it was always missionaries that cared about who adhered to what religion for the purpose of personnel deployment. Part of Barrett's motivation to quantify the world was to know how many non-Christians there were and where to reach them with the Christian message. This graph from 1953 is the first of what would become many such global diagrams, where Barrett attempted to succinctly summarize complex concepts. The shape and style of this diagram—a large outer circle with numerous details within it—is featured throughout his 2001 *World Christian Trends*.

2 See Michael H. Botting, *Fanning the Flame: The Story of Ridley Hall Cambridge. Volume 3: 1951–2001* (Cambridge: Hassall & Lucking Ltd, 2006).

3 F.W.B. Bullock, *The History of Ridley Hall Cambridge. Volume 1: To the End of AD 1907* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1941).

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Figure 1. David Barrett's theology global diagram, 1953



Source: David B. Barrett Papers 1957–1985, Center for the Study of Global Christianity, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (South Hamilton, MA, USA).

1960s

The 1960s was a busy decade for Barrett. From 1957–1961, he served his first missionary tour in Kisii, Kenya with the Church Missionary Society, after which

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