POPULATIONS OF WORLD RELIGIONS

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There have been, for the last 2000 years, two primary religious currents in the West.

An above-ground (exoteric, visible, public) tradition called Christianity.

An underground (esoteric, hidden, secret) tradition called the “Western esoteric tradition.”

So many TV shows rely upon the underground current for their content: magic, devils, superheroes (a recrudescence of polytheism), etc.

The four biggest religions are:

Christianity 2.2 billion

Catholic 1.2 billion

Protestant 830 million

Eastern Orthodox 150 million

Islam 1.1 billion

Hinduism 850 million

Buddhism 330 million

total: 3.13 billion

Since the world is currently about 8 billion (reached on 15 Nov. 2022, according to the United Nations), the four biggest religions leave 4.77 billion unaccounted for. Those are Sikhs, Zoroastrians, Jews (only 15 million: 6 million died in World War II), Confucians, Taoists, adherents of indigenous (primitive) religions, atheists, agnostics, nones (no religious affiliation), etc.

Since the world’s population is 8 billion, and Christianity is 2.2 billion, Christianity is a bit over one fourth of the world’s population.

Catholicism is 1.2 billion, and Islam is 1.1 billion. Demographers project that Muslims will overtake Catholics around 2050, since the birth rate is higher among Muslims.

Catholicism remains the single largest religious group in America (the second largest is Southern Baptists, at 11%). Catholics in America declined from about 22% of the country in 1990 to about 19% today. The sex-abuse scandal broke in 1984, so some of the 3% decline may be due to that. But some of it may be due to a longer-term trend: the growth of nones among millennials. Why have nones grown among millennials? Social fragmentation? Globalization? Social media?