

Chapter 1

Knowing Jesus

Over 6.3 billion people currently live on the earth. Almost two billion (33 percent) are Christian and another billion and a half (22–25 percent) follow Islam. Islam is increasing 2.9 percent a year, faster than the 2.3 percent growth in world population. This statistical trend suggests that Islam will likely surpass Christianity within a few decades. Asiatic religions represent another billion and a half (25 percent), comprised mainly of one billion adherents of Hinduism (15 percent), 350 million followers of Buddhism (6 percent), and 225 million adherents of Chinese traditional (4 percent). The nonreligious include the final billion (14 percent). Approximately 4,200 religions publish adherent statistics. Of these 4,200 churches, denominations, religious bodies, faith groups, tribes, cultures and movements, most are Christian.¹

The overwhelming diversity in Christianity is not found in the behavioral requirements of the different churches—the overriding emphasis of Jesus’s teachings—but rather in each denomination’s theological and philosophical interpretation of scripture. History clearly teaches us that breakaway movements from existing Christian churches were caused by these inherent doctrinal differences.