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A religious census of Boston

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A RELIGIOUS CENSUS OF BOSTON.

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Approved
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There is a general impression that the church is losing ground; that it is not keeping pace with the rapidly increasing population. Dr. Dorchester in his careful work upon the "Problems of Religious Progress" has sufficiently proved the falsity of this assertion, as it relates to the entire United States. Here he shows that Christianity has gained remarkably. But it still remains unsettled, in regard to particular localities, especially in large centers of population whether the church has kept pace or fallen behind the population. To answer this from its statistical side is the object of this investigation. We propose to confine our research to Boston and vicinity, covering a region having a population, within a radius of ten miles from the State House, of 1,128,704.

Our investigation concerns (1), the progress of church organizations during One hundred years; (2), the progress of church membership during fifty years; (3), church finances, property valuation, seating capacity, and benevolences.

Three classes of churches have been grouped for the sake of comparison. These are (1), the Evangelical, (2), the Liberal, and (3), the Roman Catholic.

The figures here presented are drawn from Dorchester's "Problems of Religious Progress", from "The United States Census", for 1890, and the year-books of the various denominations. Some denominations still persist in keeping their facts in the dark, some in confusing facts with fancies.

I. Church Organizations.

How have church organizations increased in the last one hundred years? The following table shows the various denominations at various intervals during the period.

Table No. 1. Church Organizations in Boston.

Denomination.	1800.	1850.	1880.	1890.	1900.
Congregational	2	21	26	30	33
Baptist	2	18	26	28	33
Episcopal	2	14	22	27	33
Methodist Episcopal	1	11	26	24	32
Other Evangelical		11	23	27	29
Total Evangelical	7	75	122	136	160
Unitarian	13	30	29	30	23
Universalist	1	8	11	8	10
Other Liberal		2	3	3	3
Total Liberal	14	40	43	41	36
Roman Catholic	1	14	30	60	74
Jewish		1	4	18	19
Miscellaneous Bodies				28	31
Total All Denominations	22	130	203	275	320

Now taking a radius of ten miles from the State House, including Boston, we secure the following table.

Table No. 2. Organizations of Total Radius.	1800	1850	1880	1900.
Congregational	10	44	70	93
Baptist	3	32	60	86
Episcopalian	4	24	42	73
Methodist Episcopal	1	24	61	81
Presbyterian		1	7	11
Other Evangelical		10	19	34
Total Evangelical	18	135	259	364
Unitarian	22	47	52	50
Universalist	1	22	26	24
Others		3	3	
Total Liberal	23	71	81	81

have been gaining in organizations in the U.S., Boston and vicinity has been losing.

While Boston had one Liberal church to 10938 inhabitants in 1890, there was but one to 19390 in the U.S., showing Boston to be still the Liberal center.

While the entire U.S. had one Catholic church for 6120 inhabitants, Boston had one for 7470 inhabitants. In regard to the entire church organizations of Boston as compared to the same in the U.S., we find in 1870, one church to 532 inhabitants, and in 1890 one church to 378 inhabitants, while Boston had in 1890 one church to 1690 inhabitants.

The conclusions, which are fairly drawn from these figures are, that Boston on the whole is not so well organized as the rest of the U.S.; that it is better organized in Liberal churches and about equally organized in Roman Catholic churches.

Now let us compare Boston to New York as to church organizations. New York had one church of all denominations, in 1850, to 2095; in 1870 one to 2044; and in 1890, one to 2819. This shows that Boston was more extensively organized than New York for each of these periods.

II. Church Membership.

Now, what is the record of actual growth in communicants during the last fifty years in Boston and vicinity? Table No. 4. shows the following:-

Table No. 4. Population and Communicants of Boston.

Date.	1850.	1870.	1890.	1890.	1900.
Population.....	182786.	292499	363938	448477	560892
Church Communicants.					
Congregational.....	6175	7747	8561	10076	11578
Baptist.....	5231	7897	9673	11885	15762
Methodist Episcopal	2495	4816	5307	5963	7412
Episcopalian.....	2153	3946	5675	8187	10581
Presbyterian.....	80	1090	1461	1536	2054
Others.....				4540	5153
Unitarians.....				9652	3443*
Universalists.....				1228	1748

*families.

Table No. 4. (continued).

Church Communicants:	1850.	1870.	1880.	1890.	1900.
Jewish.....	30000*				30000*
Roman Catholic.....			160027**	185188	260000***
Other Bodies.....					3813
Total.....				244048	358201

*estimated 1897. ** for 1885. ***estimated 1897.

The records for the entire radius are as follows:-

Table No. 5. Population and Communicants of Total Radius.

Date	1850.	1870.	1880.	1900.
Population.....	249555	449947	578881	1022384
Church Communicants,				
Congregational.....	8796	14088	18258	28780
Baptist.....	7217	12278	16905	30123
Methodist Episcopal.....	3825	8400	10589	17381
Episcopalian.....	2734	5991	8577	23918
Unclassified.....		3103	5008	8887
Universalist.....				3330
Unitarian.....				6156*
Total Evangelical	23108	42770	58026	106926

*families

This shows by comparing communicants of Boston with population for this periods as follows:-

Table No. 6. Number of inhabitants to one communicant, Boston.

Date.	1850.	1870.	1880.	1890.	1900.
All Evangelical Bodies.	11.1	11.1	11.1	10.85	10.91
Congregational.....	29.	38.	42.	44.	49.
Baptist.....	31.	37.	37.	37.	35.
Methodist Episcopal.....	73.	60.	68.	75.	75.
Episcopalian.....	84.	74.	64.	54.	53.
Roman Catholic.....			2.5	2.4	2.1
All religious bodies.....				1.8	1.9

The same for the entire radius gives the following results:-

Table No. 7. No. of Inhabitants to One Communicant in Total Radius, evangelical churches.

Date.	1850.	1870.	1880.	1900.
All Evangelical....	10.7	10.5	9.9	9.6
Congregational....	28.	32.	31.	35.5
Baptist,	34.	36	34	33.9
Methodist.	65.	53.	53.	58.
Episcopal.	88.	75.	67.	42.

In the entire United States the evangelical communicants held the following proportions to the inhabitants during the several periods.

1800.	1. in 14.5
1850.	1. in 6.57
1870.	1. in 5.78
1880.	1. in 5.
1890.	1. in 4.53

This shows that while Boston gained in proportion to population in evangelical communicants, it did not gain so much as the entire country. The same is true for the entire radius. Below we have been compelled to modify this result. The Catholic church in the United States held the following relation to the population:—

1850.	1 to 14.37 inhabitants.
1870.	1 to 8.38 ..
1880.	1 to 7.88 ..
1890.	1 to 7.3

Comparing these figures to the Catholic church in Boston, we see that it is remarkably strong in Boston as compared with its position in the United States.

The reason for the apparent slow gain of the Protestant church in Boston and the small number of Protestant communicants as compared to the entire country, is to be found in the large liberal and Catholic population it contains. For example, subtracting the liberal members and Catholics and Jews from the population we find that there was one member for five and twenty-nine hundredths inhabitants in 1890, and one member for four and nine-tenths in 1900. This makes out a far better case for the Protestant church in Boston and shows that it compares favorably with the entire country when we consider its relatively large Catholic and liberal populations.

Now when we compare Boston's entire church population with the entire ^{church} population for 1890, we find Boston had one communicant for one and eight-tenths inhabitants, while the entire country had one for two and seven-tenths. This is also due to its large Roman Catholic population; while Boston had one evangelical church-member to every eleven and one-tenth inhabitants in 1880, New York had one in fourteen and thirty-hundredths. New York had one Catholic communicant in 1880 to every two and six-tenths. Boston had one to every two and five-tenths.

Confining our attention to the various denominations of the evangelical group, we see that all have fallen behind the population some except the Protestant Episcopal Church. This has steadily advanced from one member in eighty-four inhabitants in 1850 to one in fifty-three in 1900. The gain of this church has been even greater for the entire radius. The only other church to show any appreciable gain was the Methodist Episcopal which about held its own in Boston and gained in the entire radius. The Congregational Church seemed to lose ground both in Boston and in entire area. The Baptist Church more nearly held its own. On the whole something might be said from these figures about the tendency of the more ritual and closely organized churches to increase at the expense of the less ritual and independent bodies. No doubt this is so as a separate investigation would show that the Protestant Episcopal Church has drawn its increase largely from the other evangelical bodies.

A broad view of these figures leads us to conclude that the evangelical church is not only holding its own but increasing on the population with steady and healthy progress.

III. Church Seating Capacity, Property valuation, Expenses and Benevolences:

What accomodation for worship do the churches provide for the population of Suffolk County? This includes beside Boston, the City of Chelsea, and the Town of Revere, having a population of 33577. The following table shows the provisions for each denomination :-

Table 10. Church Seating Capacity and Edifices of Suffolk Co. 1890.

Denominations.	Edifices.	Capacity.	Halls.	Capacity.
Advents.....	3	1025	2	200
Baptist.....	34	23775	1	400

Table No. 10. (continued).

Denominations.	Edifices.	Capacity.	Halls.	Capacity.
Free Will Baptist.....	2	985	--	--
Roman Catholic.....	39	45290	24	6539
Congregational.....	38	27436	5	1575
Methodist.....	31	20410	1	400
Presbyterian.....	5	3450		
Protestant Episcopal.....	36	13920		
Unitarian.....	10	4550		
Unitarian Unitarian.....	41	21073		
Colored Methodist.....	3	2700		
Jewish.....	5	4015	2	825
Others.....	20	9650	31	8564
Total	268	178269	66	18503

Suffolk County thus has one church for every Fourteen Hundred inhabitants, while in the entire United States there is provided one church for every Four Hundred and thirty-eight inhabitants. This means according to actual seating capacity that in Suffolk County the churches can accommodate forty-three percent of the population while in the entire United States the churches can seat sixty-nine and six-tenths percent of the entire population. Less churches and a smaller seating capacity than the rest of the United States is Boston's showing on this line.

The Catholic church has a seating capacity of 51829 for a membership or population of 185188. Four services on Sunday could and does amply seat this large number. The Roman Catholic Church can accommodate eleven hundredths of population, whereas it can accommodate but five hundredths in the United States.

The Protestant churches on the other hand had in 1890 144943 seats for and actual membership of 58860. Subtracting the Catholic and Jewish population we find that the Protestant Church in 1890 provided 144943 seats for 238269 inhabitants. Considering the number of inhabitants detained at home it is fair to state that accommodations for attendance on public worship are ample.

The value of church property in Boston and vicinity is shown in this table ~~xxxxxxx~~ as far as obtained.

Table No. 11. Boston Church Property.

Denomination.	Churches and	Per Mem.	All Property.	Per Mem.
	Sites. 1890.		1900.	
Congregational...	2, 318, 100	200	3, 036, 000	262
Baptist.....	1, 502, 000	95	1, 653, 500	104
Methodist.....	1, 085, 000	144	1, 297, 000	174
Prot. Episc.	2, 144, 175	202	3, 403, 641	321
Presbyterian...	220, 000	106		
Universalist.....	396, 000	322	1, 133, 920	649
Unitarian.....	2, 477, 500	256	3, 036, 000	320
Catholic.....	3, 296, 700	18		
Other Bodies.....	1, 879, 500			
Total	14, 671, 375			

Table No. 11. Part II. Church Valuation; Radius. 1900.

Denomination.	All Property.	per mem.	Exclusive of Boston:	per mem.
Congregational...	4, 985, 175	173	1, 871, 400	108
Baptist.....	3, 186, 400	105	1, 532, 900	106
Methodist.....	2, 431, 000	139	1, 134, 000	113
Prot. Episc.....	4, 751, 467	199	1, 347, 826	101.
Presbyterian.....				
Universalist.....	1, 510, 289	453	406, 369	256
Unitarian.....	3, 969, 360		933, 300	

This table combined with the population, shows that Boston had in 1890, church property amounting to Twenty-six Dollars per capita, while the entire United States had church property amounting to but Ten Dollars and eighty-five Cents, per capita. The Catholic Church holds Twenty-two Hundredths of the whole as against One-hundred and Seventy-three Thousandths of the whole for the entire United States. The liberal churches hold Nineteen Hundredths of church property in Boston as against Thirty-five Thousandths in the United States; the evangelical, Fifty-nine Hundredths as against Seventy-seven Hundredths. A comparison of each separate denomination of the evangelical church shows; Baptist of Boston holds One Hundred and Two Thousandths as against One Hundred and Twenty-one Thousandths in the United States; Congregationalists Fifteen Hundredths for Boston, One Hundred and Ninety-three Thousandths for the United States; Episcopal for Boston Fourteen Hundredths, as against One Hundred and Twenty-

One Thousandths for the United States.

The question of the cost of running the churches of the various denominations, is of interest. The items included under the term expenses are salaries, church improvements, heating, light, etc. and are as nearly as possible made to include the same items for each denomination. This table also includes the benevolences of the several denominations. These figures cover only the year 1899. The result may be thus tabulated:-

Table 12: Boston.

Den.	Expenses	per mem.	per Church	Benev. per mem.	per Church.	Av. Salary
Cong...	159,937	13.8	4846	96,735	8.35	2931.
Bapt...	230,731	14.	6688	66,843	4.23	2025
Meth...	70,745	9.	2210	18,418	2.48	575.
Epis...	369,567	34.*	11199	58,128	5.02**	1761
Presby.	40,011	19.	6668	2,426	1.12	404

Table 13: Radius excl. of Boston.

Cong.	266,060	15.4	4434	157,504	9.1	2630
Bapt.	169,854	11.8	3204	54,966	3.8	1037.
Meth.	190,389	19.	3967	31,486	3.1	642
Epis...	111,062	9*	2266	57,376	4.6**	1434

Radius including Boston.

Cong...	425,997	15.1	4580	284,239	8.80	2731
Bapt...	390,585	12.9	4541	121,809	4.	1416
Meth...	261,120	15.	3223	49,904	2.87	616
Epis...	480,629	20.*	65.83	115,504	4.82**	1582

* including parochial benevolences.

** excluding parochial benevolences.