

Globalization and the Re-Shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands

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Excerpt from Foreword

There has been considerable anticipation by the Pacific Church community and ecumenical organisations of Dr Ernst's book. It is a sentiment equally shared by overseas partners, mission boards and world organisations. This in itself is clear evidence of its importance and the first indicator of its assured status as one of the most important and needed piece of research done for our churches and the ecumenical movement in our region. The book is a must for all who genuinely desire to understand why our religious landscape looks the way it is today. It is an essential resource for all ecumenical organisations and theological training institutions. Given that we are still in the initial stages of our journey in the 21st century, this book is a timely contribution in our efforts to chart and navigate our way forward.

Analysis

Going beyond a mere description of what is labelled 'The Re-shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands', answers are offered to the questions that sparked off the research project, namely:

- What is the relationship (if any) between globalization and changes in religious affiliation?
- Why do people join new religious groups and bear the consequences of sometimes breaking away from families, relatives, communities and traditional ways of life, thereby causing pain and conflict?
- Why are the historic mainline churches in a long term state of decline and apparently unable to re-adjust their structures, programmes and activities to the challenges of a rapidly changing social environment?
- What are the implications on economics, politics and culture if more and more people join new religious groups and so form a conservative social movement, which in some islands already displays features of the New Religious Right or the so-called Moral Majority in the USA?

Finally, the research has tried to develop for the historic mainline churches an outline of how they could respond to the manifold challenges of globalization. In this context the possibilities for a new visionary model of being church are explored, with reference to the rediscovery and reformulation of ecumenical co-operation in all areas of work and a firm move towards a theology (in both theory and practice) that places the marginalized, disadvantaged, oppressed and poor in the centre.

If the Pacific Island countries are to fully benefit from globalization, their leaders must put in place proactive programs that ensure these negative effects are addressed immediately. Melania Baba is a graduate in Law and Political Science at the University of the South Pacific. Currently, she is a legal officer at a local nonprofit concerned with the protection of Fiji's environment and the promotion of sustainable resource management through law. Baba is interested in international relations and climate change with particular reference to the small Pacific island states in the Pacific. Gue Shows students how Pacific Island societies are responding to and shaping the forces of globalization. Views globalization "on the ground." Provides students with a look at the day-to-day effects of globalization on people's lives. 12. Market Highs: Alcohol, Drugs, and the Global Economy in Oceania, Mac Marshall. 13. Recovering and Rebuilding After the Tsunami in Papua New Guinea: International Aid and Village Aspirations, Robert Welsch. 14. The Meanings of Work in Contemporary Palau: Policy Implications of Globalization in the Pacific, Karen L. Nero, Femina Brel Murray, and Michael L. Burton. 15. Environmental Change, Economic Development, and Emigration in Tuvalu, John Connell. IV. This is replaced in Globalization by a short introductory chapter on the historical background of Pentecostal and Fundamentalist churches, which, regrettably, says next to nothing of the Mormons or about the key role played by para-church organizations in evangelizing activities on the global stage. The main innovation of the new study is the expansion of the national case studies from six to fourteen countries, with the significant addition of Papua New Guinea. Most of the case studies conclude with a short summary and outlook on the problems and prospects of Christianity in the island state under review. The case studies make for fascinating reading. As one would expect, the length of the chapters varies according to the populations of the countries