

Globalization and the Re-Shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands, edited by Manfred Ernst. Suva: The Pacific Theological College, 2006. ISBN 978-982-348-020-6; xx + 866 pages, maps, photographs, bibliography, notes, index. US\$50.00.

This massive volume builds on and in some ways surpasses an earlier survey by Manfred Ernst, *Winds of Change: Rapidly Growing Religious Groups in the Pacific Islands* (1994), which was sponsored by the Pacific Conference of Churches. Like the earlier study, *Globalization* is generally concerned with the reasons for the increasing popularity of relatively new conservative Christian denominations, mostly at the expense of “mainline” churches descended from the mission organizations that entered the region in the nineteenth century. Both volumes rely heavily on government censuses and church membership counts to chart a shift that has been underway since the end of the Second World War but has greatly accelerated in many Pacific nations over the past quarter century. In the new volume, Ernst enlarges on his earlier argument—that the rising popularity of conservative Christianity in the region has to be understood in terms of globalizing forces that have served to undermine the older solidarities of village and kin in exchange for the uncertainties of rampant capitalism, and have, at the same time, promoted a kind of American cultural imperialism embodied by groups like the Mormons or Seventh-Day Adventists. As well as providing a broad picture, both books rely on Island nation case studies to give readers a better sense of local trends as well as

the identities, activities, and attitudes of local churches and para-church organizations.

Here the similarities end. *Winds of Change* opens with a very useful gazetteer of “new religious groups” (the largest of which, as Ernst acknowledges, are only “new” in terms of their increasing popularity). Taking up almost a third of that earlier study, the survey provides background information on each denomination and supportive para-church organization, including basic beliefs, structure, funding, activities, cooperation with other sects, and distribution. 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. The case studies are based on statistical research and hundreds of interviews with church officials, carried out by a team of ten scholars working from a standard framework devised in May 2002. Taking up nearly 80 percent of the text, they provide an essential resource for anyone interested in the contemporary shape and dynamics of Christianity in the region. The countries covered include Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, and Fiji in Melanesia; Tuvalu, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, and Pohnpei in Micronesia; and Sāmoa, American Sāmoa, Tonga, Niue, and French Poly-

nesia in Polynesia. In addition, Klaus Hock contributes a chapter surveying non-Christian religious organizations serving the Indian population of Fiji.

The case studies roughly conform to a basic scheme. Each opens with background information on a variety of subjects, usually including geography, population, land tenure, health and education, history, and politics. This is followed by a statistical survey of recent trends of religious adherence, based on government censuses, church surveys, or some combination of both (with the exception of the chapter on Pohnpei, in which the statistics, for some reason, are incorporated into the survey of denominations). The next and usually longest section is taken up with profiles of denominations, touching on their local histories, patterns of growth, social and political activities, and, when known, interactions with other sects and ecumenical organizations. 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 covered and the availability of information. The interests and experience of the authors, however, also introduce distinct differences in the depth of coverage and the subjects covered. Four of the studies especially stand out. Philip Gibb's chapter on Papua New Guinea goes to heroic lengths to map the fragmented religious landscape of that country, currently home to more than two hundred Christian denominations and organizations. Lynda

Newland provides a superbly informative—and very disturbing—account of the troubled involvement of the Fijian churches in the military coups and continuing racial tensions that have deviled that country. Her chapter is complemented by Klaus Hock's richly detailed survey of Hindu and Moslem religious organizations in Fiji. Finally, Yannick Fer and Gwendoline Malogne-Fer provide an informed overview of shifting religious affiliations in French Polynesia, buffeted as they have been by that territory's long and troubled relationship with France. They also introduce readers to one of the more unusual organizations, the Association of Christian Surfers.

While the case studies have an encyclopedic feel, the volume as a whole pursues a definite purpose: to document and account for the rising popularity of conservative Christian sects, particularly Pentecostal and Fundamentalist denominations, at the expense of the established mainline churches. Ernst explains the transition in terms of the rampant spread of a rapacious global capitalism that has severely disrupted local societies. Established churches have been left mute in the face of rapid change, while conservative sects have rushed in to fill the void, offering converts "a shortcut to certainty" in the promise of individual salvation (731). As a result, the Christian world is witnessing the emergence of two forms of Christianity, "ideological" and "utopian" (733). In their focus on the moral reform of the individual, the conservative churches ideologically embrace the values of global capital. The mainline churches, on the other hand, perceive themselves as embedded in communities and

thus obliged to critique authority and seek “to improve the current social order” (733). Unfortunately, however, mainline churches in Oceania today have generally failed to live up to their moral obligations to the distressed communities they serve. Ernst ends the book with a passionate plea for mainline churches to embrace a “liberating theology” that will directly confront the evils of globalization.

It is not hard to poke holes in Ernst’s analysis. The statistical data that form the empirical basis for tracking changes in church membership are uneven, often unreliable and difficult to interpret. As Philip Gibbs points out for Papua New Guinea (148), people shift their allegiance between churches for a vast variety of reasons most of which have little obvious connection to globalizing forces. In the country studies, it is not hard to find examples of denominations that do not fit into Ernst’s overly neat distinction between the two Christianities: mainline church leaders who embrace fundamentalist positions or conservative groups that marry a salvationist theology with an embrace of community values. As opposed to the individual case studies (including his own), Ernst’s general assessment of conservative Christian groups, in particular, too often comes across as hostile and heavy-handed.

To pursue such criticisms very far, however, is to miss the point. Despite the sociological trappings, there is a prophetic quality to the book, especially in the concluding chapters where Ernst’s rhetoric assumes the form of a “jeremiad” (after the biblical prophet Jeremiah): a lamentation on the failings of the mainline churches, tied to a warning of a dark future should they

not reengage with the serious problems besetting Oceanic communities. While perhaps too generalized and too closely associated with the concerns of one (albeit large) faction of Christian churches, Ernst’s analysis raises profoundly important questions about the current reshaping of religion in the Pacific Islands. In the national surveys especially, the volume makes an enormous contribution to knowledge and will remain an essential resource for scholars, believers, and the merely curious, for many years to come.

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Conservation Is Our Government Now: The Politics of Ecology in Papua New Guinea, by Paige West. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006. ISBN cloth, 0-8223-371206; paper, 0-8223-3749-5; xxx + 320 pages, tables, maps, photographs, appendixes, abbreviations and acronyms, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, US\$79.95; paper, US\$22.95.

The year 2006 was a stellar one for the anthropology of Papua New Guinea. Major publishers produced monographs that demonstrate the continuing ability of Melanesianists to produce important and original works. *Conservation Is Our Government Now* is a fine example of this trend; detailed and yet accessible, it is an excellent book that deserves to be widely read by anthropologists, students, and development and conservation professionals.

Conservation examines the Crater Mountain Wildlife Management Area,