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.
The growing importance of the Asia-Pacific region (APR) in contemporary international relations cannot remain without attention of the major players in world politics. USA, China and Russia are well aware of and understand the basic world political trends. The shift of political and economic weight towards Asia, rapid economic development in China and the entire Asian market, increasing demand for energy all this indicates that basic processes of world politics and the world economy in the twenty-first century will unfold on the shores of the Pacific ocean. The rise of the Asia-Pacific region is carried out on the background of erosion of the unipolar world and the transformation of modern system of international relations. Asia and the Pacific is considered the region of the world with the greatest number of pilgrims and travelers for religious events, for both international and domestic tourism. According to UNESCO, 60% of the world population practices a religion and these believers from the demographic base of religious tourism. Many countries include religion in their census. It is estimated that there are approximately six hundred million national and international religious and spiritual voyages in the world, of which 40% take place in Europe and around half in Asia. Asia and the Pacific is blessed not only. The South Pacific region can be seen as a microcosm, in which one can encounter all the worldwide tendencies and changes in religious affiliation described above. Globalization and the Increasing Diversification of Christianity in the Pacific Islands. In recent years religion has received a good deal of attention in the discourse on globalization. Christianity in its Pentecostal-charismatic form seems to thrive in the globalizing climate. The majority of a growing number of publications in this field of study focus on the successful growth and spread of Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity.