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Changing Christianity in Oceania: A Regional Overview

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The article summarizes major changes in religious affiliation in Oceania since World War II and especially over the past 20 years by linking the increasing diversification of Christianity in the region to globalization processes and the impact of rapid social change on societies and individuals. Based on the presentation of data the author provides evidence that new forms of Christianity, mainly of pentecostal - charismatic origins, have experienced high growth rates at the expense of the established historic mainline churches. These developments mirror very much what has been observed in other parts of the southern hemisphere. Predictions are that in two or three decades from today Oceanic Christianity will have a distinguished pentecostal-charismatic flavour. The author predicts that without fundamental reflection and renewal the future perspectives for the historic mainline churches are gloomy. According to the author they seem to be ill prepared to face the manifold challenges in their societies at the beginning of the 21st century and may lose their unique dominant status they held over the past 150-200 years in the respective island nations.