Mercado, Leonardo N., ed. *Old Cultures, Renewed Religions: The Search for Cultural Identity in a Changing World.* The Asia-Pacific Missiological Series No. 7. Manila: Logos Publications, 2001. 188 pp.

Leonardo N. Mercado, a Divine Word missionary, has done pioneering work in the study of Filipino Philosophy and theology. He is the executive secretary of the Episcopal Commission for Inter-religious dialogue, Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines. A prolific writer, his other works include *Inculturation and Filipino Theology* (Divine Word University Publications, 1992); and *Doing Filipino Theology* (Divine Word University Publications, 1997), to name a few. To date, he has edited or co-edited all the books in the Asia-Pacific Missiological series. The current volume is a collection eight essays originally presented at a symposium at Nanzan University, Nagoya, Japan, September 21-27, 1997.

The book is divided into three sections. Following a concise introduction (1-7), Part I (11-88), focuses on Papua New Guinea. Franco Zocca, "Millennialism in Melanesia" (11-29) provides an overview of cargo cults—"a religious movements (sic) that is intense, short-lived, and relatively small scale" (14) which see the "arrival of cargo (any sort of manufactured goods) as sign and substance of the world to come" (ibid.). They believe that the ancestors have sent these goods. These cargo cults are millenialistic in the sense that they expect sudden changes for the better to come by supernatural force. While the "cargo mentality" has decreased in the last few decades, it is still expressed in some Christian denominations and in politics. While reactions to these cults have varied (25-26), Zocca contends that the pastoral response to new cargo cults or the revival of that mentality, must seriously consider, as proposed by social observers, that cargo cults were causes by "the sudden in-breaking of western civilization into traditional societies . . ." (27).

In his essay, "Cultural Resistance Movements in Papua New Guinea" (30-44), Patrick F. Gesch speaks from his personal encounters with the Mount Rurun and Lo Bos of Madang movements. He defines cultural resistance "as a rebellion against an undesired cultural hegemony" (31). As the modern world invades them, the people in these coastal villages "try to adjust to the new times by drawing their answers from traditional religious ways" (42).

Douglas W. Young's, "Chaos and Unpredictability" (46-61), provides a case study of cargo cultism in the Enga people of the highlands. He claims that "Millenarian Thinking . . . ('imminent, total, ultimate, this-worldly, collective salvation') existed in Enga before the coming of the European" (47). This fact must be recognized so that the pastoral response would be characterized by humility (61).

Philip Gibbs, in "New Religious Group in Papua New Guinea" (65-88), describes three such groups: "churches" which compete with the mainline churches; "movements" within mainline churches (some come from outside while others are indigenous expressions of faith); and cargo cults (66-67). Coupled with

these new groups is the growing involvement of the mainline churches in politics. Two examples include the Catholic Bishops' Campaign in Preparation for the 1997 Election (68-69) and Operation Bru Kim Skru (72-75).

Part II (91-148), consists of two studies on the Philippines. Benigno P. Beltran, "The End is Nigh" (91-116), surveys militant revolutions in the Philippines as an expression of "religious rebellion" (100). He claims that the fuel of such revolutions was the syncretism caused by mixing "Christian eschatology and apocalyptic with shamanistic elements" (106). He elaborates on twelve such elements (106-9). Beltran concludes that with the fervor generated by the notion of the end, that disenfranchised people will "seek messianic leaders" (114) to help them escape "out of history into the peace and plenty of the millennium" (ibid.). Leonardo N. Mercado writes on "El Shaddai and Inculturation" (117-41). He discusses eight reasons for the tremendous popularity of this charismatic group (six to seven million): emphasis on the Holy Spirit; attractive liturgy; effective mass communication; charismatic leadership; the needs-oriented approach of the ministry; theology; empowerment of the laity; and the use of Filipino symbols (121-37).

Part III (151-181), consists of two studies on Japan. Peter Knecht, deals with "Religious Movements and the Search for National Identity" (151-64). As he admits, the title is vague because he deals only with Japan. Basically, he deals with Mahikari, a Japanese "Spirituality Movement" which aims to purity and ready people "for a new civilization of spirit" (158). Its founder, Okada Kotama (d. 1974), claimed that followers would have power to work miracles, cleanse physical and psychic impurities, and have salvation. These and other ideas have found root in "spiritual intellectuals" (160). Indeed, "human beings and other beings of nature . . . share the same life and spiritual force" (163). This is what helps to shape concepts of national identity" (ibid.).

Finally, Robert Kisala questions, "New Age Apocalypse? The Use of the Nostradamus Prophecies in Japanese Religions" (165-81). Following the poison gas attack by Aum Shinrikyō on the Tokyo subways in March 1995, many Japanese thought that he had been influenced by Christian apocalyptic literature. Kisala contends, however, that it may have been "the prophecies of Nostradamus and their popularization in Japan since the 1970s [which] may be the key to understanding the apocalyptic interest seen in Aum and other recent new religious movements" (165). Besides Aum, he examines Nostradamus' influence on Agonsho, Okawa Ryuhō, and Tenshōkyō (171-77).

This book has several good characteristics, among them: useful references at the end of each essay; a handy index; a wide representation of scholars (though they are all from the Society of the Divine Word order [SVD], having varying interests: systematic theology, sociology, missiology, conflict resolution, contextual theology and indigenous spirituality. There are also some useful tables and figures.

There are some shortfalls too. Firstly, the intent of the book is to illustrate how *new* religious or religious movements interpret *old* cultural values. However, each article does not clearly delineate how this is done. At times, the reader has to be

more than a little imaginative to see the nexus between these two factors. Secondly, some ideas are left inconclusive. For example, Mercado, following Harvey Cox (*Fire From Heaven*, Addison-Wesley, 1995) claims that the future of Christianity points toward Pentecostalism (121, 140). He does not fully flesh out this notion in the El Shaddai movement. Finally, for such a major publication this book has far too many grammatical, editorial, and spelling problems. Despite these, I think that the trained scholar, especially in missiology, will find this book useful.

Kenneth D. Mulzac

Van Voorst, Robert E. *Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence*. Studying the Historical Jesus. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. xiv + 248 pp.

Robert E. Van Voorst is professor of New Testament at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan. He has previously authored several other works, including what is no doubt his most widely used book, *Building Your Greek New Testament Vocabulary* (Eerdmans, 1990). In this work, Van Voorst contributes to the series Studying the Historical Jesus, which attempts to understand Jesus not so much theologically as historically. Questions of faith aside, what is the historical evidence for Jesus of Nazareth, who was called the Christ? Van Voorst explores the evidence in the ancient noncanonical sources, both classical Greco-Roman and Jewish writings. He also discusses Jesus in the hypothetical, reconstructed sources of the canonical Gospels and in the post-NT Christian writings.

Van Voorst begins by acknowledging the work done before him, including arguments for the nonhistoricity of Jesus, concluding that "the theory of Jesus' nonexistence is now effectively dead as a scholarly question" (14). In support of this conclusion, he summarizes the main arguments used against the nonexistence hypothesis as it has been articulated by George A. Wells.

Not only does Van Voorst quote (in English) the various sources which offer testimony concerning the historicity of Jesus, but he offers a careful scholarly evaluation of the credibility of each of these sources. This sober evaluation of the various sources is what makes this work especially valuable for students interested in the historicity of Jesus.

As one might expect, the different traditions reflect different portraits of Jesus. In the classical Greco-Roman sources, Jesus was primarily a *troublemaker* who was executed for His crimes (73-74). In the Jewish sources, He was primarily a *magician and deceiver* who "founded and led a movement that tried to lead Israel away from the one true God and his Torah" (134). In the hypothetical sources of the canonical Gospels, no single portrait can be found, but each reputed source has a unique picture of Jesus which is a subset of the portrait of Jesus found in the respective canonical Gospels from which the sources have been reconstructed (176-77). In the Christian writings after the NT, the evidence is too controversial