

RANK AND RELIGION IN TIKOPIA, by Raymond Firth. *George Allen and Unwin*, London, 1970. 424 pp. £5.

The Tikopia are Polynesians, but in several ways rather unusual. Demographically, they are one of the smaller discrete groups, being about 1,200 in 1929, geographically they are isolated from the main groups of Polynesians (hence being in the territory of the Anglican diocese of Melanesia). They have been the last Polynesian group to undergo mass conversion to Christianity, and they have been extremely fortunate in having so thorough and sympathetic an observer as Professor Raymond Firth to record the world of Tikopia at the point of commitment to Christianity. Professor Firth has made three visits to Tikopia, in 1928-9, in 1952, and in 1966. On the first visit he found a community equally divided between pagans and Christians, on his second a Christian majority, and on his last, an island entirely Christian except for one old woman, who, if she did not go to church, did not practise paganism in its ritual form.

While *Rank and Religion in Tikopia* can be read on its own, there are frequent cross-references to Professor Firth's other Tikopia studies, notably *Tikopia Ritual and Belief* and *The Work of the Gods in Tikopia*. 'The Work of the Gods' was the name given to the elaborate twice-yearly liturgy, orientated to maintaining good relations between spirits, men, and nature as related to man. These rites were controlled by the chiefs, mobilized an elaborated pattern of links between lineages, and were the occasions for the expression of the Tikopia ritual idiom, characterized by the kava rite—kava in Tikopia, unlike other Pacific communities, having a sacred, but no secular, use.

This priestly cult was filled out, rather than opposed, by a spirit-medium cult, which, although séances occurred even in the Work of the Gods, served rather to provide a means of individual adjustment and scope for fantasy and innovation. Spirit-mediumship was an individual matter, not tied to the formal structure of the society.

Those who know Professor Firth's earlier work will not need to be told that the book is always profitable, and usually pleasurable, reading. The degree to which the Tikopia participate in any particular belief or ritual is always carefully indicated. Professor Firth puts forward his own explanations modestly, and is more concerned to see how Tikopia religion functioned, than why such-and-such a

form should be there at all.

While Raymond Firth is himself an unwavering humanist, his discussion of Tikopia conversion is as thoughtful as is that of paganism, even if one suspects that just a little more effort was needed to maintain his habitual fair-mindedness. He gives several reasons which influenced conversion, ranging from easier access to trade goods to the appeal of Christian ethical teaching. Some of the accounts of conversions are fascinating—chiefs performing a kava rite as a last farewell to the old gods, or in the best Anglo-Saxon style receiving baptism in the company of a group of faithful followers. The total conversion of the island produced a feeling of relief among the Tikopia at the restoration of ideological unity. Interestingly, it also brought to an end two phenomena which often arise in the wake of evangelization: the existence of a group of non-practising Christians, and the practice of spirit-mediumship by some Christians. While the author acknowledges that he did not go very deeply into Tikopia Christian attitudes, these seem to be similar to those in many recently evangelized lands, an ethical monotheism acknowledging the primacy of Christ rather than a deeply Trinitarian and incarnational faith. Although Melanesian Anglicanism is 'high', and there is a resident Tikopia priest, we are told little about attitudes to the eucharist, apart from the great respect in which it is held, and that at one service observed nearly all the people present received communion.

Professor Firth concludes, surely correctly, that conversion has not brought either social disintegration or cultural uprootedness to the Tikopia, but that they will find eventually new strains within the wider community they have now entered.

Who should read this book? Social anthropologists, obviously, and anybody who is seriously interested in the Western Pacific. Also, perhaps those theologians who assure us that Christianity is not a religion—an assurance in which one would have more confidence if one could be sure that they had some idea of what religions are like on the ground, so to say. Finally, all those who (like this reviewer) believe in liberty of conscience for the conundrum posed by such an episode as this:

'She wished to be united with her age

mates, girls who otherwise continually teased her and called her "Satan", making her much ashamed—Vakasumore had spoken to her, not in an intimidating way, but gently, pointing out that all the members of her age grade were now Christians, and she should follow suit. So she wanted to get baptized—

when one Sunday morning her brother and girls of the village crowded into her house and swept her off to church and baptism, she made no resistance.'

Forced conversion, or proof of the social nature of Christian witness and commitment?

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NEW ATLAS OF THE BIBLE, by Jan H. Negenman. *Collins*, London, 1969. 218 pp., 214 illustrations. £5 5s.

MEN BECOME CIVILIZED, edited by Trevor Cairns. *C.U.P.*, 1969. 96 pp. 15s.

When the *Atlas of the Bible* appeared in the fifties (the original Dutch edition in 1954, the English version, from Nelson, in 1956), the great catch-word was still *ressourcement*. And—to use yet another French term—this fine Atlas was one of the great achievements of the *haute vulgarisation* of this process. Like so much else that is good, it was another product of the *Ecole Biblique* of Jerusalem. Now Collins has succeeded Nelson and produced a *New Atlas of the Bible* for the post-conciliar world, and the question is whether they have profited from the intervening fifteen years to produce what *Which?* would call a better buy.

Three criteria could be used.

The first is that suggested by a perceptive remark in the *T.L.S.* review of the second book under consideration (Vol. I of the *Cambridge Introduction to the History of Mankind* for schools): 'There is still great room for development of the kind of writing—or should we call it book-planning?—that uses text, diagrams, maps, drawings, visual statistics and black-and-white or coloured photographs as *elements of a single integrated language*' (4.12.69; italics added). By this standard, the Collins work must be adjudged to be as deficient as the Nelson Atlas and the first of the Cambridge series of limp-bound books are excellent. Whereas in the *Atlas*, maps, pictures and diagrams were clearly subordinate to and illustrative of the text, the *New Atlas* looks as if it had been pulled together uneasily from the efforts of three almost independent departments charged with text, maps and illustrations. Thus, for example, the legend for the characteristically gaudy map on page 94 merely sums up and repeats what had been stated in the text on pages 91-94, whilst the coloured photograph of sheep in a high *wadi* on page 87 seems to be put in merely for its very picturesqueness. In fact, these terms, 'gaudy' and 'picturesque', as well as the fact of repetition, suggest that the technique

of presentation owes more to the restless habits of the reader of colour supplements than to the needs of the inquiring student of modern research on the Bible and its background.

This want of due integration of text with maps and illustrations leads us to ask how the two texts themselves therefore compare, which is a second criterion. Here a paradoxical conclusion emerges: despite the eye-catching and popularizing character of the presentation as a whole, the text of the Collins atlas in fact lacks the pungency, concreteness and zest of the earlier text of Fr Grollenberg, O.P. This seems to stem from a difference of conception: where the Nelson atlas was the history of a people, so that its parts were articulated in the Hebrew fashion in terms of a people personified—'Birth and Infancy', 'Youth', 'Independence', etc.—the Collins atlas is articulated in terms of a history of the Book—'Birth of the Bible', 'Growth of the Bible', 'Completion of the Old Testament', etc. At the same time a 'straight' history of the people is smuggled in under the rubric 'against the background of' in the sub-headings, which serves merely to confuse the focus.

So far, then, the Collins atlas would seem to have no justification. Only the lapse of time might supply this. In fact the later book does not seem to bear much evidence of more up-to-date scholarship, except that it rightly gives a fuller account of the Qumran discoveries and of the conjectural growth of the New Testament, with due reference being made to the relatively recent *Redaktionsgeschichte* theory of the writing of the Gospels.

On the whole, therefore, a rigorously *Which?*-type examination would yield the conclusion that the earlier atlas is still the better buy—especially at the reduced price which is now even more likely. And if this