



The Megachurch and the Mainline: Remaking Religious Tradition in the Twenty-first Century

Stephen Ellingson

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Religious traditions provide the stories and rituals that define the core values of church members. Yet modern life in America can make those customs seem undesirable, even impractical. As a result, many congregations refashion church traditions so they may remain powerful and salient. How do these transformations occur? How do clergy and worshipers negotiate which aspects should be preserved or discarded?

Focusing on the innovations of several mainline Protestant churches in the San Francisco Bay Area, Stephen Ellingson's *The Megachurch and the Mainline* provides new understandings of the transformation of spiritual traditions. For Ellingson, these particular congregations typify a new type of Lutheranism—one which combines the evangelical approaches that are embodied in the growing legion of megachurches with American society's emphasis on pragmatism and consumerism. Here Ellingson provides vivid descriptions of congregations as they sacrifice hymns in favor of rock music and scrap traditional white robes and stoles for Hawaiian shirts, while also making readers aware of the long history of similar attempts to Americanize the Lutheran tradition.

This is an important examination of a religion in flux—one that speaks to the growing popularity of evangelicalism in America.

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