to imagine that circumstances did not
commonly force similar adaptations in
precontact times.

Lacking anthropological skills,
as the author notes, he was unable
to situate his accounts of the yam
and tambaran cults in the social and
cultural organization of Abelam
society. As he also acknowledges, he
obtained virtually no information
from female interlocutors and hardly
any more on women’s participation in
the structures and events he describes.
It is part of the charm of Gerrits’s
work, however, that he goes out of
his way to emphasize these limitations
and even to acknowledge where he
thinks his claims may be wrong, for
instance regarding his introductory
survey of Abelam social organization
(370n13).

Finally, the reader is advised that,
although Gerrits’s descriptions of core
aspects of Abelam initiation (here sup-
plemented with photographs of initia-
tory and ritual penis bleeding) are all
but unique in the New Guinea ethno-
graphic record, they do raise privacy
and confidentiality issues. The infor-
mation on which the book is based
was originally made available only to
the Basel and Stuttgart museums and
to the National Museum of Papua
New Guinea “on a condition of con-
fidentiality” (24) because at the time
some of his Abelam interlocutors “felt
that certain details of the initations
should not be made available to non
initiated Abelam” (370n3). Gerrits’s
justification for making them public
now is that much of Abelam culture
has gone and that PNG National Cul-
tural Policy advocates they be made
available to present-day Abelam, their
descendants, and other students of

Abelam culture (24). Others may feel
that this issue is rather more complex.

These reservations aside, the aca-
demic world is fortunate that Ger-
rits undertook what has clearly been
a long-term labor of love. Though
The Haus Tambaran of Bongiora is
unlikely to draw a wide academic
audience, this should not be held
against it because it succeeds well in
achieving its modest and clearly identi-
fied goals.

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Christian Politics in Oceania, edited
by Matt Tomlinson and Debra
McDougall. asao Studies in Pacific
Anthropology Series, Volume 2.
isbn 978-0-85745-746-2, ix + 260
pages, illustrations, maps, bibliogra-
phy, index. Cloth, us$90.00.

This edited volume continues a by
now significant history of monographs
in the anthropology of Christianity
in Oceania, with Mission, Church
and Sect in Oceania (edited by James
Boutilier, Sharon Tiffany, and Daniel
Hughes, 1978) and Christianity in
Oceania (edited by John Barker) as its
main predecessors in the Association
for Social Anthropology in Oceania
(ASAO) series. So what has Christian
Politics in Oceania to offer to the cur-
rent popular field of studies of Christi-
anity in the Pacific and beyond?

In their introduction, the editors
repeat the question that Fenella Can-
nell posed in her edited volume, The
Anthropology of Christianity (2006):
“What difference does Christianity
make?” Matt Tomlinson and Debra McDougall argue that in Oceania, “the difference that Christianity makes is always and inevitably political” (2), both in terms of political relations between denominations and in the way Christian churches partake in debates about the governing of society (13). This observation is a reassertion of earlier work, like Philip Gibbs’s long-standing research on the interplay between Christianity and politics in Papua New Guinea (PNG). As Gibbs stated in a 2005 working paper, “Political Discourse and Religious Narratives of Church and State in Papua New Guinea,” in that country, “attempts to keep religion and politics separate often meet with incomprehension and resistance on the part of the general populace, for in traditional Melanesian terms, religion has a political function: seen in the power to avert misfortune and ways to ensure prosperity and well-being” (Gibbs 2005, 1).

The recent upheaval caused by PNG Parliament Speaker Theo Zurenuoc, who started to remove all “ungodly images and idols” from the National Parliament, is another affirmation of the entanglement between Christianity and politics in Melanesia. What this volume successfully offers is a comparative perspective between Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Fiji—historically entwined “troubled nation-states” in terms of engagement with Christianity—richly supported by comparative discussions of Christianity in these settings by the interlocutors themselves (4). More specifically, Christian Politics in Oceania provides insight into the diversity of mainly Protestant denominations in the Western Pacific (Melanesia) and their entanglements with local and national politics, kastom, and culture, as well as their infighting.

The first two chapters focus on denominational competition, with Courtney Handman analyzing this through the perspective of an argument over land and the use of musical instruments (traditional drums) in Protestant church services in Papua New Guinea’s Waria Valley. Michael Scott sublimely reveals internal Christian politics in the dialogic construction of the “underground army” on Makira, Solomon Islands, which some regard as the defenders of kastom, while Seventh-Day Adventists see the army as Satan’s base, operating in the interest of the Catholic Church, which they perceive as the anti-Christ.

The next three chapters address the ways in which Methodist and Pentecostal denominations in Fiji, Vanuatu, and Solomon Islands “shape ideas of the nation and inculcate practices of citizenship” (15). Matt Tomlinson illustrates religious politics of nation and state building in Fiji through the linguistic and rhetorical analysis of a sermon by the New Methodist Church leader, Vulaono. Tomlinson shows how Vulaono critiqued other churches’ practices by emphasizing the “new” as a source of religious and political legitimacy in service of Fiji’s latest coup, versus the old and familiar in the Methodist church of Fiji and the previous government. Annelin Eriksen equally discusses the interplay between Church and State, and, in particular, the ways in which churches in Vanuatu are taking on state forms. Here, emerging governing bodies that have
strong Christian ideals, such as the cooperation between AusAID and the Vanuatu Christian Council, produce state effects—regulating behavior, education, and creating the idea of the Christian as the ideal Ni-Vanuatu citizen (117). Debra McDougall continues this discussion of churches’ state effects by analyzing the narratives of two men who respectively converted between different evangelical churches and between Christianity and Islam, thereby showing both the fragmenting and uniting outcomes of new sects and churches in Solomon Islands.

The final three chapters deal with articulations of religion and politics as marked domains. John Barker presents a very useful overview and analysis of the literature on Church and State in Papua New Guinea. He discerns four patterns by which Christianity has been incorporated in local political orders: “articulation, fusion, mimesis, and adoption” (156). He also points to the lack of studies focusing on the interplay between Christianity and politics on national levels, which is the topic of a 2013 special issue of *Oceania* (83 [3]), *Becoming Like the State*, edited by Daniel Fisher and Jaap Timmer. This theme is touched on in Geoffrey White’s chapter on chiefs, Church, and State in Solomon Islands. White uses the ordination of a new bishop and the installation of a new paramount chief to illustrate points of connection and disconnection between kastom, Christianity, and politics. He suggests that the injection of “bureaucratic rationality” in such ceremonies connects these events “to wider spheres of the state and governmentality” (171). The final chapter is by Joel Robbins, who, unlike the other contributors, emphasizes the division between Church and politics. He argues that the Urapmin in Papua New Guinea lack a political theology, meaning that their charismatic Christianity does not shape politics and debates about how to govern society. Instead, as one big Pentecostal sect, the Urapmin have “adopted a strict diarchical model,” which creates distinct religious and political domains (203). This perspective is in contrast with Gibbs’s observation (see previous quote) and frames the Urapmin in opposition to other groups in Papua New Guinea and beyond. However, given the dynamic nature of the developments in indigenous Pentecostalism, one wonders whether the conclusions of Robbins’s research still hold fifteen years after he did his fieldwork.

The volume closes with an afterword by Webb Keane, who sees four central issues raised in the collection: “the place of theology in sociological and cultural analysis,” “the nature of religion as a category in political analysis,” “the distinctiveness of Christianity per se,” and “the relationship between religion and morality” (212). Keane concludes by stressing a paradox: the goal of totalization in Christian politics versus the modern and secular divisions that set religion apart from other spheres (222). This paradox, however, seems to me largely derived from a tendency to conflate Christianity with Protestantism, not only in this volume, but also in other recent debates in the anthropology of Christianity.

*Christian Politics in Oceania* lacks a thorough comparative perspective of Christian politics in Oceania because Catholicism and the Eastern
Pacific (Micronesia and Polynesia) are almost absent in the volume, except for some brief references in the introduction and the afterword. This is unfortunate, as a regional interdenominational comparison would have revealed several issues. For example, while some chapters emphasize the relationship between Christianity and national identity, the internationality of Roman Catholicism is often problematic, with the authority of Rome decreeing or influencing local and national practices and belief. Likewise, the relationship between kastom and Roman Catholicism has seen a dynamic profoundly different from that between Protestantism and kastom. An indicator of such denominational strife is elucidated in Scott’s chapter, wherein Seventh-Day Adventists see the Catholic/kastom underground as Satanic. Significant is also the extent to which Protestantism seems to influence the anthropology of Christianity. By focusing on texts and words (Tomlinson and Keane), and by suggesting a break with tradition and the past (Robbins), the volume seems to follow the Reformation’s agenda, which is closely related to notions of modernity. Another issue is that while, as Handman notes, Protestantism emphasizes the individual’s inner belief and “making immediate a transcendent God” (24), the contributors here tend to focus predominantly on the more accessible outward manifestations, such as politics in the public domain. In other words, the volume also raises questions about the (Christian) politics of the anthropology of Christianity with regard to Oceania. But this said, there is much to be lauded in this volume, especially the diverse insights into what local people make of Christianity, as well as the distinctive forms that local politics take in the wake of contemporary religion.

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Mr. Pip. Feature film, 130 minutes, DVD, color. 2012. Written, produced, and directed by Andrew Adamson; distributed by Focus Features International. English with subtitles. DVD/BLU-RAY available April 2014.

“Imagine” is the key message in the film Mr. Pip, which brings Charles Dickens’s novel Great Expectations into a Bougainville village classroom amid the turmoil of civil war and trade blockades after the Bougainville Copper Mine crisis. In the film, set in the 1980s, when the rebels were fighting Papua New Guinea forces known as the Redskins to regain control of the island of Bougainville, the village school reopens with the one European on the island, Mr Watts, also known as Mr Pip, leading the few remaining students through a reading of Great Expectations each day. In a period of disruptions and disjunctions, “Mr Dickens” becomes a key figure for the students as they seek to imagine life in nineteenth-century England, half a world away. “Fiction can be dangerous in times of war,” as the film’s publicity slogan underlines.

The plot of Mr. Pip, which is based on Lloyd Jones’s Booker Prize–listed novel of the same name, explores the expectations of one student in