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Charlotte Walker-Said. 2018. *Faith, Power and Family: Christianity and Social Change in French Cameroon.* Woodbridge: James Currey, pp. xxi + 314, Hb £40.00. ISBN-13: 9781847011824; Pb £10.99. ISBN-13: 9781847011831.

Faith, Power and Family is an innovative, detailed study of the lives and experiences of African Roman Catholics in early twentieth-century Cameroon. There is a huge literature on Christianity in Africa, especially throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, that has offered fine-grained examination of the diverse motivations and experiences of those African men and women who chose to convert to Christianity. If it is possible to offer a single generalisation about this vast scholarship, one important common feature is that much recent work has problematised the notion that Christianity is a European colonial foreign import, repressively imposed upon Africans and stripping them of their own indigenous spiritualities. Instead, much of this literature examines the manifold ways in which Africans themselves have appropriated and transformed Christianity for their own purposes, imprinting upon this religious tradition a range of local concerns and in the process creating a truly indigenised faith.

It is within this historiographical tradition that Walker-Said's own original contribution is located. Focusing in fine-grained detail upon Cameroonian evangelists, her intention is to demonstrate how African catechists 're-purposed' Christianity for their own ends, focusing not so much on the European missionaries who introduced the faith to the region, but rather on the multiple African catechists who did the on-the-ground work of carrying the faith to local communities and playing the role of culture brokers by translating the message in terms that resonated with Cameroonian constituencies. One of the many ways in which Walker-Said's contribution provides a genuinely innovative perspective and is set apart from the bulk of similar studies, is through her choice to focus on Roman Catholic Africans. The historiography has been largely dominated by studies of Protestantism in Africa and associated groups such as the heterodox Independent Churches. Walker-Said offers an important counterbalance to this Protestant focus. She is particularly interested in demonstrating how Cameroonian Catholics mobilised their faith and the resources of this worldwide Church (especially its liturgical and sacramental traditions) as they navigated a period of extreme social change, including labour

migration and the challenges concomitant with the introduction of waged work, colonial rule and the colonial authorities' willingness to give ever greater sanction to the repressive authority of chiefs and patriarchs. Walker-Said shows how Catholicism's new ritual, liturgical and doctrinal practices and beliefs helped young converts shape newly egalitarian definitions of citizenship and social identity, resisting the colonial-chiefly alliance and asserting the importance of individual freedom unmoored from the power of rural elders and colonial officialdom. In this respect, Walker-Said integrates religious belief as a key component of the development of the independent Cameroonian nation-state.

Walker-Said particularly focuses on the family and on marriage. She recognises that one of colonialism's most far-reaching effects was in the intimate and familial realms. While colonialism hit hardest in the realm of the family, this was also the arena within which Christianity and in particular Catholicism made the most distinctive impact; as she writes, 'marriage was the most exalted, coveted and controversial' of all the Christian sacraments in inter-war Cameroon (4). Christian redefinitions of the family and of marriage became one of the most powerful ways in which African Catholic evangelists and laity both responded to colonialism and 're-purposed' Christianity as a faith capable of speaking to the social predicaments of Cameroonian people. Walker-Said shows how the Christian ideal of monogamous companionate marriage empowered both men and women to challenge existing notions of polygamous marriage and simultaneously break from the often repressive authority of male elders (who were often allied with European colonial authorities). Walker-Said also demonstrates that the Christian rejection of bridal-wealth payment as sinful had decisively emancipatory consequences for young men. While previously men had struggled under the massive financial burden of rendering payment to their brides' families, now, freed from the obligation to pay bridal wealth, young male Catholics were free to define themselves outside of existing financial and social hierarchies and remained disentangled from often disempowering complex debt arrangements managed by elders.

While much of the book focuses upon male experience within the Catholic church, Walker-Said's final chapters are welcome in that they offer a perceptive analysis of female converts. She provides important qualifying comments to the Christianity-as-emancipatory narrative, demonstrating that while younger men may have found their faith to be a key resource for contesting the power of local rural patriarchs,

women did not always experience this. Walker-Said shows that African women in Christian marriages often experienced the church as intrusive and judgemental in their personal lives, finding themselves at the receiving end of a new patriarchal order, albeit one headed up by Christian leaders rather than traditionalist elders. In this sense, Walker-Said's analysis offers a nuanced portrayal of the impact of Christianity, underscoring the ways in which it both provided genuine opportunities for innovation and recasting the traditional social order, while in other ways (for example, through its maintenance of patriarchy) extending its effects.

The book will be read with interest by scholars of religion in Africa, historians of Africa and African religion and gender studies scholars.

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Arne Redse. 2016. *'Justification by Grace Alone' Facing Confucian Self-Cultivation: The Christian Doctrine of Justification Contextualized to New Confucianism*. Leiden: Brill, pp. xi + 498, Pb €89.00, \$115.00. ISBN-13: 9789004302570.

The search for contact points between Christianity and Chinese cultural resources can be traced from the earliest attempts in the seventh century up to today. Like more recent scholarly works, Arne Redse's book, *'Justification by Grace Alone' Facing Confucian Self-Cultivation: The Christian Doctrine of Justification Contextualized to New Confucianism*, joins the conversation, seeking to clothe Christianity in Confucian robes.

The book is divided into five chapters. The first two chapters look at introductory matters and methodological considerations for contextualisation. Chapter three develops all aspects of the Lutheran doctrine of justification that Redse believes will be necessary and useful for contextualising Christianity to a twentieth-century New Confucian context. The New Confucian context is developed in chapter four, relying on four key figures in New Confucianism. The fifth and final chapter follows the clear method as presented in chapter two, revealing how the doctrine of justification can be contextualised to New Confucian concepts, and where there are bridges and barriers to finding common or communicable ground.