



*Religion in Sixteenth-Century Mexico: A Guide to Aztec and Catholic Beliefs and Practices.* Cheryl Claassen and Laura Ammon.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. 396 pp. \$130.

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This work, coauthored by professors of anthropology (Cheryl Claassen) and religion (Laura Ammon), has an ambitious if open-ended goal: to explore, as stated in the preface, “the development of religion as transferred from Spain to Tenochtitlan” (preface). Given the complexity of the societies, cultures, and religious beliefs and practices of the Iberian Peninsula and the Valley of Mexico, the time period in question, the ever-evolving understanding of Nahuatl and Aztec culture, and not least—as implied in *transferred*—what constituted such matters as conversion, this exploration would seem to be far from straightforward. Some might wonder if the work’s unusual structure does not make the task more difficult. The authors depend on an introductory essay to briefly describe Aztec history and religion, fifteenth-century Spanish Catholicism, and the creation of New Spain. This essay—a mere sixty-four pages—amounts to a succinct survey, and should not be overlooked, especially not by those unfamiliar with the terrain. It bears the responsibility of both introduction and conclusion—a heavy load indeed for its brevity. The heart of the book consists of 290 pages in which 118 keywords, selected to illustrate the development of religion, have been arranged alphabetically (from *adultery* to *women*) in an encyclopedic format. The work closes with appendixes on the Aztec Feast Cycle and persons of note in Europe and Mexico as well as references, an index, and a glossary of Aztec deities, places, and words.

Both authors bring experience and expertise to this undertaking. Ammon, drawing on Bernardino de Sahagún, Jose de Acosta, and others, has authored works on sacrifice and theology in sixteenth-century New Spain and on the comparative method in religion. Claassen has published on belief and ritual in eastern North America during the Archaic and on pilgrimage and fertility in Mexico (the last two appear as keywords in the work under review). Furthermore, the authors acknowledge, for their explicit assistance or essential writings, among others, Molly Bassett, Elizabeth Boone, Louise Burkhart, David Carrasco, Inga Clendinnen, Jaime Lara, Alfredo López Austin, Barbara Mundy, Robert Ricard, and David Tavárez—a list that enables closer scrutiny of the sources of influence on the keywords that pertain especially to Central Mexico. They adopt David Chidester’s definition of religion as activity “marked by concerns of the transcendent, the sacred, [and] the ultimate” express the hope that they will “give each side” (1)—that is, Spanish and Aztec—an equal voice in the analysis (against the oft-expressed tendency to privilege one alone), and plunge into the keywords after the introductory essay.

The 118 keywords cover a wide range of concepts, activities, and things that touch on religious thought and expression. Included are animals, plants, and insects (bee, bird, deer, eagle, flower, insect, serpent), colors (blue, red, white), environmental features (cave, mountain, spring/well, tree, thorn, water), various concepts and things linked

explicitly linked to religious thought and practice (afterlife, angel, divination, deity embodiment, heaven, hell, human sacrifice, original sin, offering, paradise, prayer, priest, religious instruction, religious labor, religious architecture, soul, supreme deity, tripartite spirit/trinity, upperworld, and underworld/hell), and various actions, activities, or processes that change one's state (baptism, bloodletting, communion, confession, conversion, divination, human sacrifice, etc.).

The structure of each keyword is identical or nearly so: each starts with discussion in fifteenth-century Central Mexico and fifteenth- or sixteenth-century Spain, and each ends with discussion in sixteenth-century New Spain. In this way one can understand more clearly the development or change of each keyword. For many keywords the authors helpfully suggest at the end of an entry that readers refer to specific others. For example, for bloodletting, following discussion of paying blood debt owed to the deities in fifteenth-century Mexico, voluntary bloodletting in Christian imagery and medieval medicine, and bloodletting practiced by native penitents and advocated by some missionaries in sixteenth-century New Spain, the authors suggest that the reader "see also astrology, blood, body: human, healing, human sacrifice, offering, penance, thorn" (95).

The sections on sixteenth-century New Spain inevitably raise the issue of conversion (as does discussion of the keyword so named). The authors follow Elizabeth Graham's approach to sixteenth-century Mayan converts to Christianity by stating that "we are willing to say that if the individual thought she was a Christian, then we will accept that" (5). That one need not look beyond the keyword *conversion* for differences of opinion on this crucial matter is a perfect example of the intellectual candor and depth of understanding brought to and resulting from this unusual volume, and of the generous gift that it represents.

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*The Saved and the Damned: A History of the Reformation.* Thomas Kaufmann. Tony Crawford, trans. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023. xviii + 358 pp. \$45.

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Single-volume histories of the Reformation are plentiful, but this is one of the best. Kaufmann is a premier church historian and one of the world's leading authorities on Luther. The breadth—and depth—of his mastery of the sixteenth-century Reformation period and beyond is superbly and engagingly presented in his six chapters on the history of the Reformation, its aftermath, and its modern reception.

From Wittenberg, Germany, "on the edge of civilization," a "little German university town of no historic significance, the Protestant Reformation very quickly became an event of European import" (1). The Reformation, in what became its various