

Jesus against the Scribal Elite: The Origins of the Conflict. By Chris Keith. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014. Pp. xix + 188. \$22.99.

In this relatively brief study, Keith manages to combine brevity with lucidity and focus, while maintaining a style that is both scholarly yet accessible to the general public. The book examines the initial causes of conflicts between Jesus of Nazareth and what K. terms “the scribal elite,” that is, those formally trained as interpreters of the Torah. He argues that, although Jesus was not a member of the authoritative scribal elite class, he acted and spoke in ways that challenged their exclusive hold on the right to teach and, more significantly, to interpret Scripture. This resulted in an escalation in tensions and open conflict between Jesus and the Jewish educated elite, leading to Jesus’ arrest and execution.

The book’s major contribution is that it shifts the focus away from the content of Jesus’ teaching as the source of conflict to his role as teacher that leads to social discord and rivalry. K. interprets the conflict as a dispute about authority and social class rather than one about theology and religious practice. Hence he seeks to maintain Jesus’ fundamental Jewishness within the varieties of Second Temple Judaism while attempting to explain why his ministry would lead to conflict and ultimately execution as a criminal of the state. K. does not say that this was the only factor involved in Jesus’ death, but his approach adds to the complexity of the sociocultural factors that placed Jesus in opposition to various elites within the Roman-occupied territories of first-century Palestine.

Historical critics may want to question the thrust of K.’s argument that the “controversy stories” are fundamentally historical and not the product of later conflicts. One might also wonder whether this study does not depend upon a Marxist paradigm that few would accept without significant qualification. Nevertheless, I found reading the book refreshing because it challenges existing assumptions and offers new lines of inquiry into the historical Jesus and his ambiguous relationships with other contemporary teachers and practitioners of the Torah.

Ian J. Elmer
Australian Catholic University, Sydney

Translated Christianities: Nahuatl and Maya Religious Texts. By Mark Z. Christensen. Latin American Originals. University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2014. Pp. xiii + 135. \$29.95.

This compilation of previously published and new works by Christensen provides much food for thought. C. focuses on what is created when one culture encounters another in the readings and translations of these Nahuatl and Maya religious texts. The book demonstrates that engagements between different cultures can signal change in shared traditional stories. To exemplify this point, C. not only presents his translations of these texts but provides commentary and connections as to how these texts compare and contrast to others published in European and/or biblical languages.

This well-researched work considers archival information for developing the historical context and foundation for the translations provided. C. presents various types of religious texts to “illustrate the diversity of religious texts and their messages” (3). By highlighting some texts by indigenous peoples from what we now call “Latin America,” this volume explicates how indigenous peoples contributed to the understanding and development of Christian themes from their own perspectives. The book therefore documents a range of Christianities developed by faithful people of various backgrounds and regions. These native authors also incorporated some of their own indigenous systems and symbols of belief into the writings, to show that some indigenous pieces were never annihilated but were reformulated within Christianities.

For anyone interested in theology or religion and culture, the dynamics of enculturation of doctrine, the histories of Latin American Christianities, and Latina/o theologies, I highly recommend C.’s book.

Neomi De Anda
University of Dayton, OH

Newman and His Family. By Edward Short. New York: Bloomsbury, 2013. Pp. xviii + 425. \$120; \$34.95.

Despite their myriad (perhaps even irreconcilable) differences, John Henry Newman’s family members were influential presences during his formative years and beyond. Newman’s family and their attitudes toward him and the Roman Catholicism they initially rejected (but would later embrace) form the subject of Short’s second major book on Newman. It is the second in a trilogy beginning with *Newman and His Contemporaries* (2011) and concluding with the forthcoming *Newman and His Critics*.

In the present volume, familial relationships serve as the lens through which 19th-century theological and social issues are examined, including socialism, truth, anti-Romanism, belief, and skepticism. S. systematically mines and analyzes archived correspondences, sermons, and biographical writings in order to offer insight into both Newman’s intellectual and personal development, but also into the society in which he lived and wrote. One particularly compelling theme is the notion of “home,” which has long created a divergence between the Church of England and “foreign” (Roman) Catholicism, one that S. terms “the misery of difference,” a term taken from a letter of Mrs. John Mozley to Newman (311, 325). “Home” can also be understood as the domestic and familial space—and in this case, a conflicting belief from which Newman had to remove himself in order to fully embrace and, indeed, find a “home” within the Catholic Church.

S. includes welcome and thoughtful illustrations taken from various museums and institutions. The illustrations include views of Oxford, a distinctive drawing of Edward Henry Manning, and a collection of captivating family portraits. This eminently readable