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THE RELIGION OF ANCIENT MEXICO

The Thinker's Library, No. 107.

THE RELIGION OF ANCIENT MEXICO

By

LEWIS SPENCE

Author of *The Gods of Mexico,*
The Civilization of Ancient Mexico,
The Outlines of Mythology, etc.

LONDON:
WATTS & CO.,
5 & 6 JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, E.C.4

First published 1945

THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN COMPLETE
CONFORMITY WITH THE
AUTHORIZED ECONOMY STANDARDS

Printed and Published in Great Britain by C. A. Watts & Co. Limited,
5 & 6 Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, London, E.C.4, England.

FOREWORD

THE main purpose of this book is to provide that somewhat elusive person " the general reader " with a compact and trustworthy account of the development and significance of the mythology and religious beliefs of the people of ancient Mexico, yet of such a character that it may with confidence be consulted by the student of Comparative Religion. No work of the kind in English has yet been published at a moderate price, and the absence of such an introductory handbook, unencumbered with matter of a technical nature, has, I am convinced, militated against the popularity and better comprehension of the subject in this country.

When, in 1923, I published my *Gods of Mexico* I speedily realized that the high cost of its production, no less than its rather severely technical tendency, would naturally limit its circulation and usefulness. It has remained the sole work dealing exclusively with Mexican religion which has been issued from a British press, and it is in the hope that nearly fifty years of research will not be lost that I have now arranged the elements of Mexican myth into a more popularly acceptable and strictly objective form. Indeed, many valuable pieces of evidence and not a few conclusions which find no place in my former works are presented in these pages.

L. S.

NOTE ON MEXICAN PRONUNCIATION

SOME of the rather unwieldy names of Mexican gods at first seem difficult to pronounce, but a little familiarity with them usually overcomes this slight handicap. In Mexican, the letter "x" is pronounced as *sh*; the name Mixcoatl, for example, being enunciated as Mish-co-atl, and Xipe as Shee-pay. The final letters *tl* are articulated with a clicking sound frequently unapproachable by Europeans, and those who cannot achieve this usually pronounce them as they are written. The names of the more important gods which present any difficulty are pronounced as follows:

UITZILOPOCHTLI (Wit-zil-ŏ-potchtli).
TEZCATLIPOCA (Tez-catli-pocā).
QUETZALCOATL (Quetzal-co-atl.
CHALCHIHUITLICUE (Chal-chĕĕ-wit-lĕĕ-kway).
XOCHIQUETZAL (Shot-shĕĕ-quetzal).

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

NOT until more than a quarter of a century after his first discovery of America did European man come into contact with her more civilized peoples. The West Indian islands, on which Columbus made landfall, had introduced the Spaniards to communities of naïve barbarians dwelling in a condition of almost Arcadian simplicity. But the mainland was to hold for the Castilian adventurers surprises which taxed to the uttermost the descriptive powers of their pens and the credulity of their superiors in Madrid. When the whole enamelled expanse of ancient Mexico lay smouldering and glittering before the eyes of Cortez and his companions in all its bizarre wonder of pyramid and lake and highway, swarming with painted multitudes whose customs and methods of life revealed a marked difference from any to which they were accustomed, they must have felt very much as might men suddenly transported to some remote planet where life had developed aspects totally at variance with the terrestrial.

But their amazement at what they beheld was reflected in that of the native peoples, who described the Spanish caravels as " houses with wings " and revealed the most insatiable curiosity concerning everything connected with the strangers. Clever Aztec draughtsmen made sketches of the newcomers, their horses, artillery, arms, and dress, and these drawings were widely circulated, along with the wildest rumours concerning the magical powers of the strangers.

The Mexicans, recalling a tradition of their fathers that a native god named Quetzalcoatl had been compelled to quit the country by evil agencies, and that

he had prophesied his return at a more auspicious time, saw in Hernando Cortez himself the restored deity of their forefathers. So confident was Montezuma that the prediction had been fulfilled that he at once dispatched to the Spanish leader the four sacred costumes appropriate to his supernatural status as a Mexican god.

Dazzled as the Spaniards were by the richness and grotesque wonder of the Aztec scene, they would probably have been even more surprised had it been given them to understand that it was in reality a comparatively novel and vulgar modern innovation erected upon the ruins of a more ancient civilized culture, or series of cultures. The Aztec or Nahua people had, some centuries before, entered Mexico from the north in a condition of barbarism, and by their warlike address had succeeded in bringing almost the entire tract now known to us as Mexico beneath their control.

Of the several cultures which preceded the Aztec or Nahuan in this extensive region, the first was almost certainly a phase in which hunting and food-gathering produced the staples of existence for a fairly large and possibly migratory population. This was followed by an agricultural period in which the discovery of the food-value of the maize-plant and its cultivation partly replaced the continuous quest of the hunter. Aided by the improved food conditions which must have followed upon the gradual progress of agriculture, Mexican man, after some thousands of years of unrelieved savagery, slowly began to develop the type of civilization known to Americanists as "Archaic," the general features of which have recently been revealed after some thirty years of archæological excavation in the Valley of Mexico.

Beneath the upper strata of Aztec and Toltec remains, the still lower deposits of a much earlier culture were found, the approximate date of which may be fixed at about A.D. 400. In some cases these

were buried under a fairly thick flow of lava, which entirely separated them from the strata in which the remains of the later cultures were to be found. A more faithful examination of this " Archaic " stage, however, made it evident that it was not altogether homogeneous; nor did it belong to a single period. Indeed, it covered quite a number of successive phases, some more or less extensive in their spread, others distinctly localized in character. Here and there, it was clear, new and alien forms of culture had poured into the main stream and in certain places novel and exotic departures in workmanship and method were apparent. Until recently, this, the most ancient of Mexican cultures, was still under course of excavation and examination, and so far its several stages of development reveal no less than five more or less distinct phases or types.

The earliest of these is known as Early Zacatencan, from the locality where its position in the series was first definitely recognized. But even this is by no means actually primitive in character, and subsequent finds may reveal still further phases between the Zacatencan and the more pristine deposits which disclose the former presence of rude hunters or early agriculturists.

These Zacatencan folk dwelt close to the shores of Lake Tezcuco in the Valley of Mexico in settlements of considerable size, choosing high ground to avoid flooding. Their houses would seem to have been of the sun-dried brick known as *adobe*, among the remains of which there is a good deal of pottery of a rather superior type as regards its material, form, and colour. With the Zacatencans began that passion for the manufacture of small figurines which is typical of Mexican art throughout the ages, and from a careful study of these somewhat elementary models we can gather some impression of what the folk who made them were like and of the clothes and ornaments they wore. Their heads are covered by a species of

turban, while their jewellery includes necklaces, bracelets, anklets, and ear-plugs. As all of them, without exception, represent female figures, it is probable that they depict spirits of fertility whose images were placed in the fields for the purpose of quickening the crops.

The Zacatencans seem to have employed quite a variety of tools, fashioned chiefly from bone or obsidian, a substance the cultural value of which we shall have to consider a little farther on. The presence of arrow-heads of obsidian reveals that they were accustomed to archery, while the presence of spindle-whorls made of pottery plainly points to the making of textiles. Querns, or grinding-stones, of lava show that they cultivated the maize-plant.

In the strata above the Zacatencan phase objects are discovered which indicate that a growing trade sprang up between the Valley of Mexico and the other parts of the country. This naturally led to a certain degree of culture-mixing and to the gradual importation of objects, materials, and customs from the surrounding regions. Alien types of pottery begin to make their appearance from the east coast, while from the Oaxaca country in the south came articles of jade, a substance which in later times was highly prized for religious as well as economic reasons. Indeed, by the time we work our way through the deposits from the earliest Zacatencan period to the latest, as presently known, the general background has changed very considerably, if not strikingly. Sculptures in stone make their appearance, the modelling of the figurines is more elaborate, seals made of pottery are found, as also incense-burners, which indicate a growing sense of ritual practice in religious development.

This elaboration of the religious idea is further displayed by the presence in the area of the Zacatencan culture of at least one of those pyramid-shaped temples known to the ancient Mexicans as

teocallis, or "houses of God." At Cuicuilco, not far from Mexico City, a structure of this kind, half-submerged by a lava flow, still stands, and excavation has shown that it was already derelict, and even in a ruinous condition at the time when it was overwhelmed by the molten tide. The existence of such a structure provides evidence of religious organization and a developed system of labour rendered possible through communal agricultural co-operation—or, alternatively, by priestly tyranny.

From the Zacatencan period we step at once into that famous phase of ancient Mexican culture known as the Toltec, concerning which the antiquaries of a more imaginative age spun fables of a character so captivating, and indeed so enchanting, that it is difficult for one who, like the present writer, was nourished in its exhilarating and mysterious atmosphere, to treat it otherwise than sympathetically or to disentangle his ideas from its glamorous influences. The Toltecs, we were assured by the older scribes whose legendary bias inspired the study of Mexican archæology three-quarters of a century ago, were a people of genius so abounding and of a culture so lofty that few of the secrets of civilization were unknown to them. When, at the romantic age of eighteen, I first perused these glittering accounts of the Toltec Age, I rather naturally accepted them at their face-value. Today, if I still value them as triumphs of that wishful thinking which is the basis of imaginative genius, I am sufficiently neutral to docket them along with Hesiod's or Martial's accounts of the Classical "Golden Age," or the Celtic visions associated with the land of *Tir-nan-Og*.

Whence did the older chroniclers of Mexican affairs obtain their exalted notions concerning this marvellous age? It is clear that they did so from the Aztec priests and upper classes, who were themselves under the spell of the Toltec legend. The Aztecs, only a few centuries before the Spanish conquest, were low-

grade savages still in the migratory condition. When they entered the Valley of Mexico they encountered a civilization as superior to their own as was that of the Romans to the way of life of the Britons of the first century of our era. They beheld great pyramid-temples, the walls of which were smothered in intricate sculpture and symbolism, stone palaces and houses, canals, and a highly developed agriculture. What wonder that they regarded all this as the evidence of a wisdom inspired by magical or divine knowledge?

The name "Toltec," which means "Artificer," remained as a term to conjure with. The conquering Aztecs at once accepted the Toltec tradition, and, somewhat clumsily at first, did their best to adapt themselves to its superior ideals. Their aristocracy, such as it was, allied itself by marriage with the Toltec nobility and boasted of its Toltec descent. It even accepted some of the gods of the Toltec people as its own. But it never quite reached Toltec excellence in architecture or manners, if it surpassed its predecessors in vigour and imperialistic ambition.

The Toltec culture was, in its early phases, contemporary with that of the so-called "Archaic." Its principal seat was at Teotihuacan, a site considerably to the north-east of Lake Tezcuco, on the shores of which the Aztec city of Mexico was built. But the Toltec civilization did not reach the Valley of Mexico until the period of the last stage of the Archaic culture, that known as the "Ticoman," which flourished chiefly at Cuicuilco, the site of the lava-encircled pyramid mentioned above. At Tula, or Tollan, the original Toltec capital, ruins of a supremely delicate taste in architecture still stand, but these, unhappily, have not been investigated as their importance demands. Caryatids in human form support the roofs, and pillars in the shape of feathered serpents stand before the shattered entrances. There is little general resemblance between these remains and those of Teotihuacan, the other Toltec centre.

Nor does the culture of Tollan appear to have been so advanced as that of Teotihuacan, the pottery and figurines of which are spread over the entire central regions of Mexico, with extensions southward. Indeed, the influences which made Toltec civilization what it was appear to have reached it from the south.

No question can indeed arise as to the precise character or origin of this southern influence. In the plateau of Yucatan and in the regions of Guatemala and Honduras dwelt a people known collectively as the Maya, who, when they first began to influence the general culture of the tribal communities of Mexico, occupied a much higher level of civilization than the latter. If the beginnings of the Toltec civilization cannot be assigned to a date earlier than the seventh century A.D., the Mayan culture of Guatemala made its appearance certainly not later than the first century before the Christian era. It was the fashion in some quarters, some twenty or more years ago, to derive the Toltec culture from the Mayan, while another school frankly declared it to be mythical. But popular tradition asserted that the Toltecs were of the same Nahua race as the Mexican Aztecs, a belief which would appear to be upheld by the general circumstances of Aztec legend and myth. However this may be, a comparative study of Maya and Toltec architecture and symbolism makes it clear that in some stage of their development the Toltecs must have been in close touch with Maya civilization.

We know at least that an early Mayan people, the Huaxtecs, worked their way from Central America up the coast of Mexico; that a border tribe, the Kuikatecs, migrating between the races, carried culture northwards to some extent, and that the Zapotec people of Oaxaca, in the south-central region of Mexico, enjoyed a culture midway between the Nahuan and Mayan types. Even so, the "provenance" of the Toltecs has not yet been fixed with anything approaching definiteness, and the problem

concerning their status may be said to remain in much the same unsatisfactory and semi-legendary condition as that associated with the Picts of Scotland.

In a compact account of Mexican religion such as this is, I have unfortunately no space to describe Toltec culture. Indeed, Toltec sites have never been excavated in any tolerable manner. Nor may I describe that of the Maya, which probably either inspired it or had a common origin with it. For further enlightenment on these difficult and complex subjects I must refer the reader to works mentioned in the bibliography at the end of this book. Broadly speaking, it may be said that the Toltec remains were contemporary with the culture of the city-states of Yucatan, to which region the Maya of Guatemala migrated in the sixth century of our era, and that Toltec culture ceased to have a separate existence at some time in the eleventh century. The later Nahua cities of Mexico, which the Spaniards found in a flourishing condition, arose at a period when the Maya civilization of Yucatan had passed its hey-day and was beginning to decline.

The Toltec power came to an end with the inrush of related but barbarous tribes from the north, who mingled with both the peoples of the "Archaic" horizon and the Toltec folk. These tribes were known collectively as Nahua, Chichimec or Acolhua, and they appear to have taken over the sites of the numerous Toltec cities or settlements and to have banded themselves into numerous states and federations—Tezcuco, Colhuacan, Azcapotzalco, and others, which bulk more or less largely in Mexican tribal history.

Lastly came the Aztecs—for us by far the most important of these communities—a migratory tribe which, legend asserted, had emerged from seven caves in the north. They belonged to the same language-group as the Shoshone Indians of the Southern States of North America, who formerly occupied the exten-

sive tract between Texas and Oregon. A very considerable period seems to have been occupied by the Aztecs in their migration from north to south, led by their great war-god Uitzilopochtli. In any case they are known to have settled in more districts than one on their southward pilgrimage, the legendary details of which have a faint resemblance to those of the Jews when making their way from Egypt to Palestine. But these were by no means the only tribes dwelling in Mexico, which is, after all, a genuine sub-continent, with an area of 767,198 square miles—more than fifteen times the size of England. This great region was formerly inhabited by at least thirty-three different tribal communities, speaking as many separate languages. Of these diverse peoples the most outstanding were the Otomi, who still occupy the states of Guanajuato and Queretaro; the Huastecs, whom I have mentioned as having Mayan affinities and who dwelt on the east coast; the Totonacs and Chontals of the Gulf of Mexico, and, on the Pacific side of the country, the Mixtecs and Zapotecs. It is well to keep in view that the peoples of the city-states situated on the banks of the Lake of Tezcuco—Tezcucans, Chalcans, and the rest—were all of Nahua stock, like the Aztecs themselves, or, perhaps, of Nahua–Toltec admixture.

Their kinsmen, the Acolhuans, do not appear to have cared for the Aztecs as neighbours. They repeatedly attacked the Aztecs in their new settlements near Mexico City and elsewhere, defeating them and driving them forth. At last a desolate tract in the vicinity of Colhuacan, on the south-eastern shore of Lake Tezcuco, was ceded to them and, overcoming the difficulties of their environment, they gradually succeeded in acquiring a rather equivocal tribal status.

As I have said, the Aztecs were bad neighbours, dour, unfriendly, and quarrelsome, and prone to unpleasant sacrificial practices which appalled their

more cultivated compatriots. In a country the peoples of which were gradually striving towards a settled agricultural existence and who possessed traditions of hereditary culture, they were more or less an anomaly. On a much smaller scale they somewhat resembled the Germans in Central Europe, as, although they affected the pose of a cultivated folk, they remained barbarous at heart, merciless, avid of conquest, and blind to the territorial rights of other communities. In the end the folk of Mexico learned to curse and abhor them because of their brutal tyrannies and the bonds of slavery imposed upon them by this pitiless and turbulent race.

The Aztecs settled at last at Tenochtitlan, the site of the present Mexico City, in the year 1324. The neighbourhood was mainly swamp, but the newcomers busily set about driving piles into the spongy soil, building their adobe dwellings either on this foundation or on platforms supported by poles driven into the bed of the lake. They paid tribute to the neighbouring state of Azcapotzalco, and gradually acquired sufficient material to erect a pyramid-temple or *teocalli* to their tutelary war-god Uitzilopochtli by trading the products of the lake to the neighbouring communities. Half a century after their first settlement at Tenochtitlan, one of their leaders was sufficiently powerful to effect an alliance with the daughter of the chief of Colhuacan, and from this union was born Acamapichtli, the first actual King or *Tlatoani* of Tenochtitlan.

Because of this association the Aztecs assisted the people of Colhuacan in their petty wars. Huitzilhuitl, the son of Acamapichtli, succeeded his father in 1396, and married a daughter of the chief of Azcapotzalco, the alliance being marked by the discontinuance of the Aztec tribute to this city save for a nominal annual " token " payment. Aided by Aztec arms, the Azcapotzalcans overthrew the city of Tezcuco, and in the reign of the next Aztec king,

Chimalpopoca, Tezcuco was once again defeated. But the Azcapotzalcans began to dread the growing power of the new ruler of Mexico, and he appears to have been assassinated at their instigation.

This naturally precipitated a war with Azcapotzalco, in which the new Aztec ruler, Itzcoatl, had the assistance of the once-hostile people of Tezcuco, a state to the north-east of the lake which bears its name, whose folk were perhaps the most genuinely artistic among the lacustrine communities and had older associations with Toltec tradition. In the event, Azcapotzalco was finally destroyed, and her ally, Colhuacan, received a severe mauling.

Tenochtitlan, or Mexico, and Tezcuco then appear to have entered into one of these pacts so dear to the political susceptibilities of the Mexican city-states. They also took into alliance the small state of Tlacopan, the arrangement being that, of such spoils of war as fell into the hands of the allies, two-fifths each were to go to Mexico and Tezcuco and one-fifth to Tlacopan. By degrees the guileful Aztecs jockeyed Tezcuco out of the leadership, and in course of time she practically lost any military importance she ever possessed, gradually becoming the Athens of the Valley of Mexico, pre-eminent in the arts of peace, and the home of a slightly more exalted theology than that entertained by the sanguinary Aztecs.

In the year 1440 Montezuma the First, the nephew of Itzcoatl, became king by election. He may be called the Frederick the Great of Aztec history. He pushed his conquests far to the south and south-east, also invading the Totonac territory to the south-west. Under his successor, Axayacatl, further tribes were laid under tribute, though not until severe reverses had been inflicted upon the quarrelsome Aztecs. It is in connection with the campaigns of this king and those of his brother and successor, Tizoc, that we first learn of those deplorable human sacrifices on a large scale with which the Aztec kings celebrated the

commencement of their reigns. Ahuitzol, Tizoc's brother, elected to the throne on the death of that ruler, is said to have sacrificed no less than 80,000 prisoners of war at the inauguration of the renovated *teocalli* of Uitzilopochtli in 1487. Of course, such a figure is frankly incredible, and allowances must be made for the exaggerations of the early chroniclers of Aztec history, who founded their assertions upon native statements. Ahuitzol appears to have been a strong and able monarch, and he succeeded in consolidating the territories won by his predecessors into something resembling an Aztec empire.

With Montezuma the Second, who was elected as *Tlatoani* in 1502, the Aztec Empire came to a sudden and disastrous conclusion. In his youth Montezuma had been an able and courageous military leader. But there was another side to his character. He was an aristocrat of the aristocrats, and his political leanings were, in the modern sense of the term, decidedly Fascist. Well might he have said, with Louis XIV, "*L'Etat c'est moi*" ("I am the State"), for he was a strict believer in absolute rule, and as pious in his acceptance of the doctrine of the divine right of kings as the most inflexible monarch of the Stuart dynasty.

His training as a priest—for he was constitutionally the Arch-priest of the Mexican confederation, as well as its Emperor—had nourished in him a vein of distorted mysticism native to his character. On the arrival of the Spaniards his superstitious fears overcame him; he was utterly convinced that he had to deal with an invasion of supernatural beings, the God Quetzalcoatl and his followers, who had returned to the Valley of Mexico as prophecy had averred they would. Montezuma fell and with him the tyrannous and homicidal empire which his insatiable predecessors had carried to the peak of its unrighteous prosperity.

The Mexican Government was an elective monarchy, the sovereign being drawn exclusively from one family and chosen by a council composed of military

leaders and priests. The selected ruler was usually the brother, son, or nephew of the king who had preceded him. The *Tlatoani*, or King, was regarded with exceptional reverence, as he was thought of as the representative of the gods on earth. But although nominally sovereign, his authority was actually shared with another official, the *Ciuacoatl*, or " official of the serpent goddess," who appears to have been the executive ruler, responsible for the organization of the Empire. He and the *Tlatoani* presided over a council composed of representatives of the twenty *calpullis*, or clans of the Aztec nation, the meetings of which were held in a communal building which was clearly a survival of that " men's house " so familiar to students of savage life as representing an exclusively male preserve for the more virile members of a tribe, and sacred to their communal mysteries.

The Mexican realm was governed with commendable exactitude. Its officials were well trained and its organization was carefully carried out by them. The roads were excellent, they were frequently paved, and communication between the cities and provinces was regular and frequent. The tributes paid by the dependent peoples were regularly accounted for. The public law was certainly even-handed, but drastically strict in its provisions and penalties. Theft was almost unknown, but if it did occur it was punished by slavery or death on the altar of sacrifice. If a man purloined an object made of gold, he was sacrificed to Xipe, the deity of the goldsmiths. Murder was punished by death, immorality by stoning to death in the market-place, and drunkenness, in the case of a young man, by strangling, older persons being permitted a certain degree of decorous intoxication as mitigating the rigours of age. The Courts were numerous and sat continually. A court of appeal was presided over by the *Tlatoani's* opposite number, the *Ciuacoatl*, assisted by thirteen judges. Judgment was summary and sentences were carried out imme-

diately. Slavery was, of course, an institution, but appears to have approached the Roman ideal, slaves enjoying a good deal of latitude and being able even to possess subsidiary human chattels of their own.

The public architecture of Mexico can have been carried out only by slave labour on the *corvée* system —that is, the forced labour of conscript workers, maintained in life by the public stores of maize. Its chief feature was, of course, the *teocalli*, or pyramid-temple, several examples of which still survive. The basis of this structure was an artificial mound of earth, faced with stone, the four sides of which tapered to a level summit. Occasionally it was arranged in terraces, but in every case a stone staircase led to the platform on the top, where a small temple held the images of the god or gods to whom the shrine was devoted, along with a sacrificial stone or altar. In more than one of these structures galleries were driven through the interior, and signs of burial are evident in a few of them.

The Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacan covers an area of about 500,000 square feet, with a frontage of over 700 feet. In height it surpasses 200 feet. Although it is now destitute of stone facing, it must formerly have been covered by a layer of stone slabs on which frescoes were depicted with all the lavish ornament characteristic of Mexican symbolism. The Pyramid of Quetzalcoatl, at Cholula, covers a larger area than any in the world, its base extending to more than 1,400 feet. The great Temple of Uitzilopochtli, the war-god of Mexico, situated at Tenochtitlan, or Mexico City, the foundations of which have been excavated within late years, was the shrine of the tutelary god of the Aztec race.

The houses of the people at large were merely huts built of *adobe*, or mud, fortified with stones and thatched with maize-straw. The dwellings of the upper classes were substantial and in many cases magnificent. The palace of Montezuma, at Mexico

City, was an immense pile, capable of accommodating the entire army of Cortez and his 2,000 Indian allies, and it was surrounded by extensive gardens, cultivated with meticulous care.

Gold, which was washed from river sands, was plentiful in ancient Mexico, and the goldsmith's craft was an important one in the community. Gold articles of the most delicate workmanship were manufactured by what is known as the *cire perdu* method—that is, a model of wax, constructed on a hard core, was melted, a counter was made, and molten gold run into the hollow where the wax had been. But gold was also hammered by hand into enchanting shapes which astonished the Spaniards, who nevertheless did not hesitate to melt them down. Jade was also a highly prized medium of the jeweller's craft. The guild of feather-workers was highly esteemed, though few examples of its workmanship have survived. Mantles of feather-work, arranged in mosaic pattern and formed from the plumage of the *quetzal*, the macaw, the flamingo, and the parrot, brought high prices in the market-places of Mexico, and were worn almost exclusively by the nobility. The only metal known to have been worked, with the exception of gold and silver, was copper, and even this was but little developed. Indeed, the American civilized communities were still in the late Stone Age when discovered by the Spaniards, a fact which must steadily be kept in mind when assessing their general achievement.

The tendency of the Aztecs to military imperialism notwithstanding, life in Mexico was chiefly on an agricultural basis. As, with the exception of the deer, food-animals of any size were practically unknown in the country, the turkey and the rabbit furnishing the only other flesh-foods, the people at large were driven back almost entirely upon maize as a means of subsistence. If the growth of the maize-crop was impeded by one of the long droughts characteristic of the Mexican climate in pre-Conquest days, when

irrigation was imperfect, famine rapidly followed and thousands of folk were swept out of existence. This explains the extraordinary zeal of the Mexican tribes in rendering tribute to the gods, especially the deities of grain and moisture, without whose supposed co-operation life could not be supported.

Maize was possibly developed from an indigenous plant, the *teocentli*, or sacred maize, which is a native of the Mexican highlands. Incidentally, the theory that it was gradually evolved by Asiatic strangers conversant with the " technique " of developing corn or rice from a wild state is manifestly absurd, as this process could not have been recalled by immigrants ages after it had been evolved elsewhere and a perfected plant had been cultivated. Other important food-plants in Mexico were the *cacao* plant, tomatoes, squashes, sweet potatoes, and beans. The principal drink was chocolate, and a spiritous liquor known as *octli*, or *pulque*, was brewed from the *maguey* plant.

The general culture of Mexico at the period of the Spanish Conquest was the result of the adoption by a barbarous folk of a civilization which they can have enjoyed for a few centuries only. Probably the factor which quickened the process of advancement among the Aztecs was their intermixture with the Toltec and " Archaic " peoples of the soil. This mingling certainly helped the culture of the elder races to survive in great measure, but it equally introduced a barbarous and retrogade vein of savage ferocity and blinded fanaticism, which indeed brought the ancient culture and tradition of the Mexican Valley to a tragic and calamitous close.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGINS OF MEXICAN RELIGION

IF we read the descriptions of Mexican religion as set forth in the accounts of the Spanish priests, who began their missionary efforts shortly after the conquest of the country by Cortez, we shall probably find it difficult to dismiss the impression that the Aztec faith was a cult of the most elaborate and complex kind. Regarded superficially, it appears intricate to a degree. Each day—nay, almost every hour—brought its particular festival, rite, or observance, and the ceremonial associated with these was of the most complicated nature, while the symbolism which enriched the several cults required many years of study before it could be adequately explained. Perhaps the strangest circumstance connected with the phenomena of religion is the manner in which even its simplest ideas are capable of a swift elaboration in terms of ritualistic and symbolic form. Once the seed of a religious idea is implanted in the mentality of a barbarous community, it is surprising how speedily that mind becomes enmeshed in the " proliferations " of rite and symbol which it has cast up. But that there was a reason for the rapid growth of these in connection with the Mexican faith we shall see.

If we strip the groundwork of Mexican religion of the generous growth of emblem and ceremonial which so thickly bestrews it, we shall find it revealed as consisting of rather pitifully primitive notions concerning the manner in which the Aztecs and their neighbours thought it best to deal with the gods in bargaining with them for the necessities of existence. Denuded of the rich and varied caparisons in which it masqueraded at the period of the Conquest, and resolved into the simple factors of its elementary beliefs, the whole

brilliant array of Mexican myth and cult is capable of demonstration as a species of primitive insurance against hunger and thirst. Doubtless had this faith continued to function without external interference it would duly have developed an ancillary system of theological speculation and a lofty spirituality of the kind associated with more than one Oriental faith. It had already evolved an ethical and moral discipline so strict as to be almost Calvinistic in its stern rigidity. The piety of its priesthood, drenched as they were in the blood of countless human sacrifices, was intense and genuine. But it remains, on the whole, for the student of religious development as perhaps the most valuable example and record of the manner in which the grossest, most barbarous, and most material beliefs are capable of gradual expansion into a faith seemingly advanced in some of its aspects. The religion of Mexico extolled virtue, while at the same time it was destitute of the least tincture of mercy or pity, or any of the finer or more generous emotions which religion is thought to be capable of arousing.

Before we ask ourselves how precisely this faith assumed a character so much at variance in some ways with certain of its tenets, we must examine the several elements which went to its making. These were very much the same as in the case of other primitive faiths. There was, however, a point at which the Mexican faith had taken the wrong turning, and we shall readily discover the reasons which compelled its priesthood to adopt a course so calamitous. At the moment we have little or nothing to do with the populous assemblage of deities who inhabited its temples at the period of Cortez's arrival. We must here probe downwards to that phase of elementary reasoning which drove early Mexican man to the conclusion that, unless he came to a working agreement with the gods or powers with which he believed himself to be in touch, he would not survive, but perish by hunger and thirst.

There are good reasons for believing that before the

arrival of the Aztecs in the Valley of Mexico a rather more highly cultivated type of religion obtained in that area. Its traditions were associated with a god or culture-hero called Quetzalcoatl (Feathered-Serpent), whose cult was a mild one and who had introduced civilization and the arts into the early lacustrine communities. His worship survived to the last, but a legend existed which told how he had been driven from the land by the Aztec gods, whose gruesome rites displaced his milder and comparatively elevated worship. Inevitably the grosser beliefs of a people in the hunting stage of existence clashed with and ousted those of a more sedentary and settled folk, from whom, however, they appear to have accepted those outward embellishments which gave to their more primitive faith that appearance of advancement in ritualistic and symbolic display which so impressed the Spanish clergy in first making contact with it.

In a word, the savage Aztec hunter, faced with the relics of a more ancient and more highly developed faith than his own, adopted many of the forms of it, superimposing them upon his primitive fetishism. We cannot otherwise account for the development of a ritual and symbolism so extraordinarily rich and extensive in the comparatively brief period which separated the Conquest from the first appearance of the Aztecs in Mexico. In the hunting and migratory stage of his development the Aztec was chiefly dependent on the herds of deer which roamed the steppes of Northern Mexico, and the customs of the chase must have powerfully coloured his religious ideas. Some of the gods were, indeed, developed from deer-forms, those " Deer-fathers " or eponymous cervine shapes which were later to be found among Red Indian tribes and were thought of as permitting their " children " to be slain for human consumption in exchange for certain offerings. Until recently, the Indian hunter of New Mexico, when he killed a deer, removed the liver, and, taking an image of his hunting-god from his

pouch, he smeared its lips with the animal's blood in order to placate it. The Aztec hunter, in much the same way, plucked out the deer's heart and similarly rewarded his fetish for its complacency.

But when he observed that deer were comparatively scarce in the semi-agricultural region of the Mexican Valley into which he had penetrated, the Aztec found himself confronted by a very real difficulty. Still in the intermediate stage between the hunting and the agricultural phases, he felt that he must continue to offer up sacrifices of some kind. At first he substituted women for deer, trussing unhappy squaws by the legs on poles, precisely as he had done with the beasts of the chase when bearing them to the place of sacrifice. To his clouded mentality it seemed, "logically," the only course he could pursue if the tribe was not to starve. Then, realizing that there was a way out for him if he adopted the agricultural life of the Valley people he had conquered, he partially assumed their mode of life, although he still retained the abominable custom of human sacrifice which he had so unhappily carried over when faced with new conditions. The decision was a fatal one, resulting as it did in the destruction of multitudes.

Whether anything in the shape of human sacrifice was associated with the religion of the agricultural folk with whom the Aztec now mingled we do not know precisely. But the likelihood is that certain forms of it did actually obtain. We are aware, for example, that the Maya of Yucatan, in the south, were in the habit of sacrificing virgins to the water-gods by drowning them at certain seasons of the year, and the sacrifice of very young children to some of the earlier native deities of rain survived in Mexico until the days of the Conquest. Huaxtecan tradition, too, spoke of a horrid rite in which men were tied to a wooden frame and shot to death with arrows in order that the blood so shed might induce the gods to send down rain.

It was, indeed, the vital necessity for a sufficiency of

rain to quicken the crops and to swell the water supply which induced Mexican man to try to procure it by means of that sacrifice in which he had engaged in the hunting stage. As I have said, conditions of severe drought were fatally common in ancient Mexico, and not infrequently a prolonged season of it almost decimated the population. At a time of continued drought thousands of wretched people were usually offered up in holocaust to the deities of rain at the principal shrines in the hope of averting further disaster.

Plenty of evidence is forthcoming to make it clear that the ancient Mexicans deified the elements of growth; that is, they personified and worshipped those forces which they regarded as being severally and collectively responsible for the production of the maize-plant which gave them sustenance. These elements of growth, were, of course, the grain itself, the earth, rain, and the solar heat which fructified the maize-plant.

The earth they regarded as a monster known as *cipactli*, a complex creature resembling a dragon. Indeed, some authorities insist that the *cipactli* was nothing else but an American version of the Asiatic dragon. But in this place I have little space for the consideration of theories, and must content myself with providing a clear and objective account of the religion and mythology of old Mexico. Whatever its "cultural" origins, the earth-beast of Mexico has much in common with those of other mythologies. That some of the earth-mothers or goddesses of Mexico were associated in an evolutionary manner with this dragon-creature is clear from their representations in idol-form. In these we find the scales, claws, and tusks of a great dragon or serpent. In the mythologies of many races the Earth-mother is regarded as a ferocious and insatiable monster, destructive in her appetites. In the Babylonian, Hindu, and Scandinavian creation myths we read that the earth was

formed from the remains of a slain monster or dragon, or a living creature of gigantic size. And there is certainly a close resemblance between the general details of the earth-dragon, as portrayed by the Maya sculptors at Copan and Palenque, and those revealed in the idol of Coatlicue, the Aztec earth-goddess, which is preserved in the National Museum at Mexico City.

The grain—in this case maize—was personalized in several forms, which were almost certainly those of gods or goddesses belonging to more than one tribe, or, as some authorities think, deities representing the several phases in the growth of the grain. Thus the goddess Chicomecoatl ("Seven Serpents") may symbolize the ripe ear of the plant, while Cinteotl and Xilonen may represent the young maize ear. But these are only three out of an important group, as we shall find when we come to deal with it more specifically.

The deification of the grain requires but little explanation. Plant-growth suggests life, birth, development, and is readily associated with the idea of an indwelling spirit manifesting itself in these phenomena. That it produces the food of a tribe renders it supernatural in their eyes, magical, protective, something to be revered. The spirit which informs the plant comes to be thought of as human in its appearance and properties and, in the course of time, divine in its magical efficacy.

The rain combines with the earth to produce food, and was therefore regarded as a divine or supernatural factor. There is reason to believe that it was looked upon at a later period as the male essence of the rain-gods, which fructified the female earth. It was personalized in Mexico in the forms of the Tlaloque, or rain-spirits, over whom presided the great god Tlaloc, the father of the rain-spirits, in whose paradise, situated in the green uplands, great jars of rain-water stood ready for the sprinkling of the earth. Tlaloc is very

definitely a personalization of the rain itself, as his sculptural images reveal. His face is formed by the interlacing of two serpents; it is painted blue-black to represent the thunder-cloud, and the garments he wears are splashed with rubber-gum to symbolize rain-spots. His robe is " the dripping garment," and is sometimes depicted as set with green gems to represent the glittering rain-drops. But the serpentine or dragon-like form he assumes seems to reveal that at one time he must have been regarded as one of those dragons or " Water Containers " which dwell in high places, jealously storing up moisture and refusing to disgorge its treasure until it is defeated by a hero or demi-god—a belief familiar in many mythologies.

As for the deification of the remaining factor of growth, the sun, I hope to explain that when I deal with the question of Mexican solar deities in its entirety; but here it may be said that solar heat is almost a self-evident element in the alchemy of growth.

As the Mexicans came to realize the existence of the several elements of growth, and to personalize them and regard them as spiritual beings, they must have speculated in their own barbarous and logical-illogical manner as to how these divine beings contrived to exist. If these supernatural ones supplied man with the means of sustenance, it seemed to stand to reason that man should in turn supply the gods with food to keep them in life. It must, indeed, have been assumed that the gods had no means of livelihood. As hunters the Aztecs had made blood-offerings of part of the prey they killed to the hunting-gods in order that these deities might not wreak vengeance upon them for slaying the deer or other game, which were thought of as their property or " subjects." The savage believed that if he shared his prey with his god, the god condoned the offence of its slaughter. It was much the same species of reasoning by which the thief seeks to make the person who discovers his crime into his confederate by suggesting that they should " go shares."

It never even seems to have occurred to the savage that a god who exacted a blood tithe was scarcely worth having a nightmare about. Nor does it seem to occur to many of our cultured contemporaries to think so. But we must remember that the hunting-gods to whom the migratory sportsman sacrificed were not originally his gods, but the spirit-guardians of the game he hunted, whom he was anxious to placate. If this be forgotten, as it frequently is by many writers on the origins of sacrifice, confusion is likely to ensue.

Of course it followed that early Mexican man, like most other barbarians, came to believe that the blood-sacrifice which had been acceptable to the guardians of the animals he had slain in the hunt would be equally acceptable to the powers of growth which he imagined as spirits, godlings, or gods. Other perfectly " logical " notions sprang up and attached themselves to this nucleus of doctrine. Unless the gods were abundantly refreshed with blood—and in the absence of that of deer or other game it must necessarily be human blood—they would be unable to continue their labours in connection with the growth of the crops. Again, it came to be thought that the amount of rainfall would be in ratio to the amount of blood shed sacrificially. If man " wept " blood plentifully, then the gods would " weep " rain. If he did not, then he must perish. The idea of sympathetic magic is certainly to be traced in this primitive notion. You devoured the " flesh " of the maize-god; he demanded human flesh in return. The earth-beast or goddess brought forth the maize-flesh. She, in turn, must receive her quota of human blood. The sun, too, must be placated and nurtured. His share of the sacrifice was the human heart, which seemed the " sun " of the body, torn from the palpitating breast of the victim, and if he did not duly receive many hearts, he would be unable to undertake his daily journey through the heavens. He had, it was thought, been preceded by other suns, which had perished

through lack of sustenance. The contemporary sun was no more immortal than they.

Naturally a people holding such beliefs would look past their own borders for the means to supply this evergrowing need for human holocaust. At no great distance from the Aztec kingdom was situated the little republic of Tlascala, whose people possessed similar customs. A strange and horrid compact was arrived at between these communities. On a given day their forces met at an appointed spot for the purpose of engaging in a strife which should furnish both with a sufficiency of sacrificial victims. To slay a warrior of the opposing forces on that occasion was regarded as decidedly in bad taste. He must be overcome in a wrestling match, or only slightly wounded, and made captive. Then, after a mock encounter, in which the victim was badly handicapped by being equipped with imitation weapons, he was ceremonially slain on the stone of sacrifice, with every accompaniment of chivalrous courtesy. He was content, for he would die a soldier's death. " Honour," that twin-aspected goddess more terrible than the earth-beast, had been satisfied!

For a number of years I have entertained the opinion that the original faith of the Aztec folk was represented in later times by what I have called the " Obsidian Religion." About a quarter of a century ago it became gradually clear to me that, beneath the surface of the Mexican faith as known at the period of the Conquest, lurked the remains of a still older cult which had gradually been assimilated with other elements into the common stock of Mexican belief and ritual. The evidence in favour of such a theory appears complete. Obsidian, I observed, played a part well-nigh preponderant in Mexican belief. Indeed, one encountered references to obsidian, or *itztli*, so frequently in the names of gods, and in the native paintings, that it was borne in upon me that it must have had a much deeper significance

in Mexican religious thought than I had formerly realized.

Obsidian is a volcanic glass found in many parts of North America, Mexico, and Central America. Of this substance the ancient Mexicans made knife-blades and hunting javelins. It is certain that the Aztecs were acquainted with obsidian before their arrival in Mexico. The deer was slain by the obsidian weapon, which therefore came to be regarded as the magical weapon, that by which food was procured. The hunting-gods themselves came to wield it, and it was thought of as coming from the stars in much the same manner that " fairy arrows " or elf-bolts were regarded by the peasantry of Europe as supernatural darts falling from above. We find the hunting-god Mixcoatl (" Cloud Serpent "), who is clad in a deer-disguise, armed with an obsidian-tipped spear, and he carries a bag of obsidian darts. Itzpapalotl (" Obsidian Butterfly "), a goddess with whom he is closely associated, is represented as having butterfly wings edged with obsidian blades. That she had been developed from dragon form her paintings reveal. It is in connection with this goddess that we find the clearest proof of the transition of the Aztec cult from a hunting to an agricultural condition. An ancient hymn to her describes how she has " become a goddess of the melon cactus," although she was " nurtured on the hearts of deer," thus revealing the change-over in status with a clarity rarely to be found in mythological literature.

But the god most clearly identified with obsidian was Tezcatlipoca, one of the most important, if not indeed the most important, in the Nahua pantheon. Nevertheless his origin as an obsidian spirit or fetish can scarcely be gainsaid. His images were frequently made of obsidian, his sandals were of that substance, the net-like garment he occasionally wears seems to me symbolic of the mesh-bag in which Mexican hunters carried obsidian arrow-heads. The name

Tezcatlipoca means " Smoking Mirror," or more probably " Obsidian Mirror," *tezcat* being certainly another name for obsidian, and in this glass he was supposed to witness the deeds of humanity and to reward or punish good and evil actions as he beheld them there.

As Itztli (" Obsidian Knife ") he is the blade of sacrifice personalized, as certain of his pictures show. As Itzlacoliuhqui (" Curved Obsidian Knife ") he is the deity of the sacrificial knife in its symbolic aspect of avenging justice. In the courts of law the penal judges drew his arrow-blade of obsidian across the sentence of death, painted in hieroglyphic characters, to make it absolute.

Mexican tradition reveals very clearly that obsidian, because of its original food-procuring properties, came to be regarded as the source of all life, indeed as the very principle of existence. The creative goddess Tonacaciuatl (" Lady of our Subsistence ") was said to have given birth to an obsidian knife from which sprang sixteen hundred demi-gods who peopled the earth. As the Aztec picture-manuscripts show, maize is frequently depicted in the form of a sacrificial knife of obsidian. Thus all the elements which make for growth and life were identified with this mineral, even the sun itself being regarded as the obsidian mirror of Tezcatlipoca. In the person of this god it was associated with the breath of life and the wind, and it therefore falls into that class of magical stones which are thought of as capable of causing a tempest. And I think that in this connection it can scarcely be dissociated from rain, one of the great factors of growth, just as it was certainly connected with blood, which by a divine alchemy came to be transformed into rain. In North America we find the blood of Tawiscara (god of the Algonquin Indians) falling as rain in the shape of flint-stones. Magical stones were usually wrapped up in cloths, and Itztli is represented in some of the manuscripts as swathed in a cotton cloth, just

as such stones were in Ireland and the Western Isles of Scotland, and these are invariably associated with a wind- and rain-making capacity.

By the time of the Conquest the Aztecs had made their tribal cult predominant throughout the regions they had conquered, and had adopted into their pantheon such gods of the surrounding tribes as appealed to their imagination, or were too powerful to be ignored. Some of the idols of these were kept in confinement in a building near the great temple at Mexico, precisely as the Babylonians were wont to keep the images of the gods of conquered peoples "prisoners." But little radical difference existed between the several Mexican cults, which appear to have been affected by a common influence. All were brought together by the amalgamating power of conquest. Many gods which resembled each other differed only as regards their local names, as was the case in early Greece and in early Britain and Gaul. By the period of Cortez's invasion a pantheon of the Mexican gods had been fully developed, all the members of which were, in one way or another, associated with the rain-cult, which was the central and coalescing factor in Mexican religion, its nucleus and foundation. The "national" deities were certainly of Aztec origin, the gods of maize were as certainly of Toltec provenance, or they were connected with the older settled tribes of the Valley, as indeed the greater deities of rain and moisture seem also to have been. The manner in which the cults of these numerous deities were so mingled as to present a single religious façade or constitution is eloquent of how primitive or politic mentality casts about for compromise in the face of popular susceptibilities, as did Pope Gregory the Great when he advised Melletus not to destroy the temples or supersede the festivals of the pagan gods of Britain, but to render them subservient to his missionary purpose.

CHAPTER III

THE RECORDS OF MEXICAN RELIGION

BEFORE proceeding farther it will be necessary to examine briefly the literary and other sources from which we glean our knowledge of Mexican religion. These are fourfold, and consist of (1) the native codices or manuscript-paintings, (2) the annals or other accounts written by native Mexican scribes in Spanish, (3) the native art-forms in sculpture, architecture, pottery, and mural painting, which represent the gods, and (4) the writings of the Spanish conquerors of Mexico.

I shall devote some space here to the first class, for the reasons that it is important to the study of Mexican religion and that no concise description of it exists in English.

If the papyri of Egypt continue to exercise a certain feeling of awe upon the wayfaring man, it is unlikely that he will experience a similar sentiment should he chance to encounter a Mexican native manuscript of the pre-Columbian period. To him it will present a mere jumble of reds, blues, and yellows, and the design will seem faintly reminiscent of the motif on a Chinese screen or fan. But if he examines it more closely he will conclude that for intricacy and obscurity of outline it bears little resemblance to any handiwork of man which even the flamboyant East has produced.

Perhaps a baker's dozen of these strange waifs and strays of a vanished civilization remain. The remnant is scattered throughout the libraries and museums of Europe, but all have now been reproduced by a process of photographic colour-printing, in most cases through the liberality of the Duc de Loubat, a well-known patron of Americanist studies. The only collection of them previously accessible to students was

that of Lord Kingsborough, who never recovered from the financial ruin occasioned by their publication in his *Antiquities of Mexico*, an encyclopædic work in ten large volumes which appeared in succession from 1830 to 1848. But the harsh printing of his day did the wonderful Aztec colour-schemes less than justice, and to gain a correct perspective of the whole we must turn to the more modern copies.

An Aztec codex or *lienza* at first sight gives the impression of a screen folded flat—a tiny screen, perhaps, such as might do duty in a dwelling of dwarfs, and only some fifteen or twenty inches in height. But when drawn out to its full length it is often found, as in the case of the *Codex Fejérváry-Mayer*, to present a painted surface nearly twenty feet long, displaying on both sides a brilliantly coloured riot of symbolic representation.

The greater number of the Mexican codices are painted upon paper made from the *agave* plant, although several are executed upon prepared skins. I have divided them into three classes according to their characteristics. The first and most important of these is the *Codex Borgia* group, composed of five codices which, painted by native scribes, obviously had a common area of origin. The second I have labelled " Unclassified " and the third " Interpretative "; that is, those which were painted by native scribes under the supervision of Spanish priests, who appended to them lengthy interpretations of their contents—explanations which, unfortunately, are frequently more vague than enlightening.

Of the first class, the *Codex Borgia*, which gives its name to the division, is the most interesting and beautifully executed Mexican manuscript in existence. It has been divided by modern scholars into 76 sheets. The first eight of these represent the ingenious calendar system of the ancient Mexicans, the following five the symbols of the 20 days of the Mexican month, and the fourteenth the recurring periods of the planet Venus,

the computation of which, it is now admitted, Mexican astronomy was quite competent to achieve. The paintings on subsequent pages relate to the terrible if picturesque rites of human sacrifice and sacrificial mutilation to which the Aztecs were prone; the passing of the sun and moon; the tilling of the soil by Tlaloc, the rain-god, and representations of other divine forms, their loves, their labours, and their symbolic attributes.

Scarcely less beautiful and interesting is the *Codex Fejérváry-Mayer*, which is also included in the *Borgia* group. Although nothing is known of its origin, it formerly belonged to the Hungarian collector Gabriel Fejérváry, whose nephew, Pulsky, disposed of it to Joseph Mayer, of Liverpool, who in 1867 bequeathed it to the Liverpool Free Public Museums, where it is still housed. It is painted on deerskin parchment, and in a style more highly conventional than that of the *Codex Borgia*. Its initial pages are remarkable as providing a fine series of pictures of the five regions into which the ancient Mexicans divided the universe. There follows a series of pages dealing with sorcery and occult lore, especially with the subject of death by magic, which may well call forth a shudder. The sun, moon, and planets are represented in subsequent pages as ceaseless wanderers with merchant's pack on back and fan in hand, and this portion probably has allusion to certain astronomical phases. Another group illustrates the story of the growth of the maize-plant, which is represented in human form, wearing the maize leaves upon its head.

Next in importance, and closely resembling the others already described, is the *Codex Vaticanus B*, which is included among the treasures of the Vatican Library, where it appears to have been housed as early as 1565. But nothing is known of the manner in which it first reached the papal library. It consists of ten strips of deerskin glued together, both sides of which have been treated with fine white stucco, on which the

paintings are executed. The whole is still protected by the original wooden covers. It contains a fine example of the Mexican calendar, and some remarkable pictures of the Houses of Rain and Drought.

The *Codex Bologna*, which is preserved in the library of the university of that city, was formerly the property of the Marquis Cospi, a celebrated student of antiquity, who in the sixteenth century formed a museum which passed into the possession of the university authorities and which included the codex in question. It is one of the smallest among the Mexican paintings and is of interest chiefly because of its fine representations of many of the gods, which are in most cases accompanied by their full insignia and symbolic attributes.

The Interpretative Codices, as has been said, consist of paintings made by native scribes, and deal with the mythology, ritual, and history of the Mexican people. They were accompanied by extensive notes by those of the clergy who interested themselves in the native lore, chief among whom was one Pedro de Rios. The most important of these documents is the *Codex Vaticanus A*, or *Codex Rios*, which is alluded to in a Vatican catalogue compiled between the years 1596 and 1600. The paintings appear to me to be the work of Europeans, and the explanatory matter is in the Italian language.

The contents, both written and pictured, are, indeed, among the most curious things in Mexican bibliography. The first picture represents *Homeyoca*, the heaven in which dwells the creator of the universe, layers of colour showing the red, the yellow, and the white heavens. The picture following gives an idea of the various localities on the road to the place of the dead, which it took four years for the soul to reach.

Then come the several ages through which the earth has passed—and which are described in the chapter which follows this—the first age in which water reigned, the second when wind was supreme, the third

an epoch of fire, and the fourth which terminated with earthquakes.

The *Codex Telleriano-Remensis*, so called from having once been the property of Le Tellier, Archbishop of Rheims, is very similar to the preceding codex in form and matter. Indeed, the documentary part of it is almost identical with that of the *Codex Rios.*

Some of the unclassified codices are also useful to the study of Mexican religion, especially the *Codex Vienna* and that known as the *Codex Zouche*, or *Codex Nuttall*, which represents the daily life of the ancient Mexicans in considerable detail.

The second class, the " annals," or accounts written by native Mexican scribes who adopted the Spanish tongue after the conquest of Cortez, are naturally of immense value to the student of Mexican religious lore. It is necessary, however, to use them with discrimination, owing to the tendency of their authors to corrupt the traditional material when carried away by patriotic or romantic notions. Such mythical or ritual matter as they contain is, however, comparatively free from this taint. These annals can be divided into those which relate historical events, such as *The Annals of Quauhtitlan*, also known as *The Codex Chimalpopoca*, and those which, like the *Relations* of Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, a princely Aztec writer, and *The Mexican Chronicle* of Tezozomoc, another Indian scribe, treat myths as history. I give the names of their works in English here for the sake of convenience, but their Spanish titles will be found in the bibliography.

The third class, consisting of sculptured images, or " idols " of the gods, pottery images, and mural paintings, frequently affords reliable material on which to base conclusions regarding the aspect and costume of the numerous deities of the Mexican pantheon, and many of these are preserved in the National Museum at Mexico and elsewhere.

The last class, the writings of Spanish missionaries and authors contemporary with the Conquest, or those who sojourned in Mexico in the period directly following it, is naturally of great value and importance. Undoubtedly the most valuable collection of evidence relating to the Mexican religion by a Spanish churchman is the amazing work of Bernardino Sahagun, *The Universal History of New Spain*, which is indeed almost a cyclopedia of ancient Mexican life and religion. He compiled it, in the first instance, in the Mexican or *Nahuatl* tongue, after most carefully consulting the best living native authorities concerning the facts he had collected. But, characteristically, his bigoted ecclesiastical superiors forbade or retarded its publication. It was sent to Spain, and remained forgotten in a monastery, whence it was at last unearthed and was printed at Mexico, in 1829, in the Spanish tongue. Of the other works in this category I need say nothing here, as they are nearly all of similar character. Their titles will be found in the bibliography at the end.

No account of the records of ancient Mexico would be complete without allusion to the calendar-system of the Nahua people, which was so closely associated with their religion and was known to them as the *Tonalamatl*, or the "Book of the Good and Bad Days." A general knowledge of this calendar-system is indeed necessary to those who wish to understand the festival-system of the Nahua, while those who intend to make a study of Mexico mythology must master it in its entirety.

The *tonalamatl* was originally a day-count based on a lunar reckoning. It was composed of 20 day-signs or symbols, each of which had reference to some god or mythological figure. These were repeated thirteen times, so that the whole calendar was made up of 260 day-signs in all. These 260 days were again divided into 20 groups of 13 days each, sometimes called "weeks." The manner of dividing them was by

affixing numbers to them from 1 to 13 in continuous series as follows:

No.	*Name*	*Sign*	*Presiding God*
1	cipactli	crocodile	Tonacatecutli
2	eecatl	wind	Quetzalcoatl
3	calli	house	Tepeyollotl
4	cuetzpallin	lizard	Ueuecoyotl
5	coatl	serpent	Chalchihuitlicue
6	miquiztli	death's-head	Tecciztecatl
7	mazatl	deer	Tlaloc
8	tochtli	rabbit	Mayauel
9	atl	water	Xiuhtecutli
10	itzcuintli	dog	Mictlantecutli
11	ozomatli	monkey	Xochipilli
12	malinalli	grass	Patecatl
13	acatl	reed	Tezcatlipoca
1	ocelotl	ocelot	Tlazolteotl
2	quauhtli	eagle	Xipe
3	cozcaquauhtli	vulture	Itzpaplotl
4	ollin	motion	Xolotl
5	tecpatl	flint-knife	Tezcatlipoca
6	quiauitl	rain	Chantico
7	xochitl	flower	Xochiquetzal

and so on in continuity.

It will be seen from this list that the fourteenth day-sign takes the number 1 again. Under this arrangement, each day-sign has a number which does not recur in connection with that sign again for a space of 260 days, so that each day-sign, *if taken along with its number*, has reference to a separate day in the calendar. Thus the first day, *cipactli*, is in its first occurrence 1 *cipactli*; in its second, 8 *cipactli*; in its third, 2 *cipactli*; in its fourth, 9 *cipactli*, and so forth. No day in the *tonalamatl* was described merely as "*cipactli*," "*coatl*," or "*calli*," its name being incomplete without its number in the sequence, just as we would not say "Thursday in October" instead of "Thursday the 7th October" or "Thursday the 28th October." It was called *ce cipactli*, "one crocodile," or *ome coatl*, "two snake," as the case might be.

Each of the 20 *tonalamatl* divisions, or "weeks" of

13 days each, as they are wrongly but usefully called, had also a presiding god of its own. The hours of the day and night had also " lords " or governing gods of their own.

Now this *tonalamatl*, or moon-calendar, naturally lost its significance as a time-count when a solar calendar was adopted. It was then regarded and employed as a book of augury or divination, the several days and hours of which become significant for good or evil according to the nature of the gods who presided over them.

Indeed, its magical significance was heightened when a solar calendar came into vogue. But instead of adopting the solar calendar and casting the old moon-calendar aside, the Mexicans combined both, the *tonalamatl* contributing the names of the days and the solar calendar the divisions or " months " of the year, in which the days found positions. The two calendars thus ran side by side, each recommencing whenever it reached its own limits. The days in the solar year were thus known by the names of the days in the *tonalamatl* affixed to them. Thus 105 of the 260 *tonalamatl* day-names had to be repeated in the solar calendar of 365 days, but of course they fell in a different " month."

The names of the 18 " months " or divisions of the solar calendar had reference to the seasonal character of the division, such as *Atlacahualco*, " Ceasing of rain," or *Tozoztontli*, " Rain desired," and they will be found in some cases attached to the principal festivals. A specific year was known by the *tonalamatl* sign with which it began. As there were 20 day-signs, and as 5 (the least common multiple of 365 and 20) " goes into " 20 exactly 4 times, the year could begin with one of four signs only. These were *Acatl*, *Tecpatl*, *Calli* and *Tochtli*.

Now all this, I admit, appears somewhat complicated at first. It certainly did to me when I first approached it; indeed, combined as it was with the

hieroglyphs of the day-signs, it seemed quite confusing. But, in reality, it is simplicity itself. I describe it here because no account of Mexican religion would be complete without it, particularly as all the great festivals and religous days are fixed by it. But it is perfectly competent to understand the indwelling spirit of the Nahuan faith apart from it altogether, although it is essential that anyone who wishes to master the details of that faith should have it at his fingers'-ends. For a much more detailed account of it I refer the reader to my more elaborate work on Mexican religion, *The Gods of Mexico*, while those who wish to comprehend its augural or magical side may consult my volume on *The Magic and Mysteries of Mexico* or the work of Seler, the title of which will be found in the bibliography at the end of this book.

CHAPTER IV

MYTHS OF CREATION AND THE MAKING OF MAN

WE now approach the myths by which the Mexicans sought to interpret the process of creation. Like other semi-civilized peoples, those of ancient Mexico invented tales to account for the existence of the world and of man. These accounts are very much what might have been expected from a folk who had emerged into the heirship of a civilization practically ready-made, a culture the exponents of which they had conquered with comparative ease, and with whom they had mingled. The creation-stories of the Nahua, as they existed at the period of the Conquest of Mexico in 1521, reveal an admixture of lowly savage conceptions, with a leaven of that kind of semi-scientific reflection usually associated with the crude initial efforts of cosmographic groping—the imaginative but puerile ideas of men who were obviously struggling with those enormous problems respecting the origins of the universe which still confront us, but which, in their time, appeared capable of a simple explanation in terms of adolescent thought. The more advanced elements of that thought, such as it was, almost certainly originated from the Toltec folk whom the Nahua found in possession of the soil, while the lower conceptions with which it is blended represent the less ambitious ideas of the Nahua Aztecs themselves.

The accounts of creation, as found in the writings of the early Spanish missionary clergy who settled in Mexico, are so inconsistent that we can conclude only that they must have originated in several localities. In view of this apparent confusion I have taken pains here to smooth out the seeming discrepancies which

confront and frequently discourage students in their first approach to one of the most difficult and intricate of mythic systems.

In an appendix to the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis* an interpretation of a group of Aztec paintings is given by Italian-speaking monks in early post-Conquest Mexico. It tells us that the god Tonacatecutli (" Lord of Our Subsistence ") divided the waters of the heavens and earth and disposed them as they now are. From his breath, it is said, he begat the god Quetzalcoatl (" Feathered-Serpent "). Another account in the *Annals of Quauhtitlan*, written by a Mexican native scribe, tells how the god Quetzalcoatl created " the four classes of humanity," while we find in *The History of the Mexicans From Their Paintings* (an interpretation of the Aztec pictorial manuscripts) that the creation of the world in detail was the work of the gods Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca.

But these accounts clash directly with that much more elaborate myth which tells how the earth, although formerly occupied by " experimental " forms of man, was not destined to receive its present inhabitants until it had passed through a series of catastrophes or elemental convulsions, and in this belief we almost certainly encounter that kind of notion which resulted from the rather more advanced Toltec type of speculation. Authorities, native and Spanish, differ somewhat widely regarding the number and character of these cataclysms. The interpreter of the *Codex Vaticanus A*, a pictorial manuscript, states that in the first age or " sun," as these periods were called by the Nahua, " water reigned until at last it destroyed the world." This Age of Water, it is said, lasted for 4,008 years, during which men appeared in a fish-like form. The second age, says this authority, was that of wind. It continued for 4,010 years, and at its conclusion men were changed into apes. The third age endured for 4,801 years and ended in a universal conflagration, while in the fourth, which

occupied 5,042 years, the human race was almost destroyed by famine.

Ixtlilxochitl (pronounced Isht-lil-shot-shitl), a royal native scribe, in his *History of the Chichimecs*, says that in the first or " Water Sun " humanity perished *en masse*, and that a second, or " Earth Sun," ended with frightful earthquakes. This was the age of the giants, who resembled the Greek Titans. The third age, " the Sun of Wind," in which nearly everything was destroyed by hurricanes, witnessed the existence of men little better than monkeys. Other writers assume that from three to five of these " ages " or " suns " had existed, including the present. But the number of " suns " had been agreed upon as five at a meeting of native astronomers within traditional memory at a time not very long before the Spanish conquest. Moreover, from a close study of the great calendar-stone, now in the National Museum at Mexico, I have concluded that its symbolism reveals the actual " official " belief concerning these " ages," which appears to be as follows:

After the god Tezcatlipoca had transformed himself into the first sun, according to this version of the story, there began an epoch known as *Naui Ocelotl*, or " Four Jaguar," which ended in the destruction of men and the race of giants by savage jaguars. Quetzalcoatl became the second sun, and his age, that of " Four Wind," ended in hurricanes and the transformation of men into apes. Tlaloc, the water god, then took upon himself the task of providing the world with light, and his epoch, that of " Four Rain," came to an end by means of a deluge of fire. The fourth age, " Four Water," was governed by his wife, the goddess Chalchihuitlicue (" She of the Jewelled Robe "), which ended in a deluge in which men were transformed into fishes. Later there appeared the fifth and present " sun," *Naui Ollin*, which, it was thought, would end in earthquakes.

It is obvious that the system described above was

the outcome of priestly speculation, such as we find in other semi-civilized communities. Indeed, we once more behold the elemental deities, earth (symbolized by the jaguar), air, fire, and water, ruling over separate and distinct mythical periods. It is an attempt to account for the origin in sequence of the great elemental powers and for the general chaos or confusion which was thought to have taken place before these settled down to share the world among them. Side by side with this idea, however, existed another and more barbaric notion of the less cultivated Aztecs that the earth was a beast (*Cipactli*) or dragon-monster, created by the gods.

As regards the creation of man, we encounter such a difference of opinion among the old writers as can be accounted for only by the existence of several local myths on the subject, originating among different tribes or races. The old Spanish friar Olmos, whose writings were lost but who is cited by Mendieta and Thevet, tells us that the Aztec paradise was governed by the male and female creative deities Citlalatonac and Citlalicue, who are also known as Tonacatecutli and Tonacaciuatl, and whom the Mexicans regarded as the sources of human existence. The goddess gave birth to that kind of flint knife which was employed in sacrifice. Scandalized by this evil omen, she cast it earthward, when immediately there sprang from it no less than sixteen hundred gods. These craved as a boon that they should be allowed to make men to serve them. The goddess replied that they should repair to Mictlantecutli, Lord of the Dead, who could furnish them with the bones of past generations, out of which they might be able to engender magically a new breed of humanity.

They dispatched one of their number, Xolotl, to the Place of the Dead, who succeeded in obtaining a single bone. This was placed in a vessel, in which each god deposited a little of his blood. From the gory mass a human boy appeared, and, repeating the

experiment, the gods then produced a girl from the vessel. These became the progenitors of the human race.

But the world was as yet dark, and the gods now addressed themselves to the task of creating a sun. One of them, Nanahuatzin, agreed to become the luminary. A fire was made, into which he cast himself. His spirit rose in the heavens as a great light, but it was stationary, and its rays scorched those deities who had remained on earth. They requested the new sun-god to depart, whereupon he grew wroth and stated his intention of destroying them utterly. So they seized their bows and arrows and shot upward at him, but with no effect. Terrified, they resolved to perish, and Xolotl dispatched them one after the other, finally slaying himself.

The sun, appeased by the death of the gods, then began to move in the heavens, and one of the sixteen hundred, who had concealed himself in a cavern, now emerged and took the form of the moon. The myth, as given by the Spanish friar Sahagun, the most celebrated among the older authorities on Mexican religion, differs slightly in detail from the above account, and adds that the gods who perished became the stars.

The Annals of Quauhtitlan tell us that the world was made in seven days. The native scribe who penned these *Annals* was probably writing under Christian priestly influence. Going to the other extreme, we find that Camargo was told by the Tlascalan Indians that the world had been produced by chance. In fact, so many various creation-stories and theories seem to have existed in Mexico that one is driven to the conclusion that the natives frequently told the Christian priests the kind of tale they thought they would wish to hear. Veytia states that the Mexicans believed the world and man to have been created by Tonacatecutli, the creative deity already mentioned. Boturini, the Italian manuscript-

hunter, credits the creation to the same first cause. Passages in Sahagun's writings lead us to believe that both Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl were regarded as sub-creative gods responsible in part for the existence of the universe. Mendieta, a writer who had the advantage of being early on the Mexican scene, says in his *Ecclesiastical History* that the creation was the work of several deities, but especially of Tezcatlipoca, Uitzilopochtli, and a more obscure god known as Ocelopuchtli, who seems to have been, judging by his name, a wizard in ocelot-shape and perhaps the prototype of those priests who belonged to the numerous cults or secret societies of ocelot or jaguar brotherhoods which were so numerous in Mexico and Central America.

An important and valuable account of creation is afforded by *The History of the Mexicans From Their Paintings*, to which I have already alluded. Tonacatecutli and his wife Tonacaciuatl, the creative deities, resolved to undertake the task of creation. They had four sons, Camaxtli, Tezcatlipoca, Quetzalcoatl, and Uitzilopochtli, of whom the first was the wisest and most powerful. These sat in council to devise the universe. They created a half-sun, a man, and a woman. The gods ordered the man and woman to till the earth and spin, and gave them the gift of maize. Next the deities framed the calendar, created water, and shaped the earth out of the *Cipactli*, or earth-monster. They were also responsible for the gods of water—Tlaloc and his wife.

The other half of the sun was then made, and Tezcatlipoca became the sun-bearer. The giants were next created, but they were gluttonous. Quetzalcoatl, after 676 years (*i.e.*, thirteen rounds of the great ritual calendar of 52 years), then became the sun-bearer in his turn, and Tezcatlipoca, liberated from his task, took the form of a jaguar and went forth to slay the giants. Tezcatlipoca, at the end of Quetzalcoatl's term as the sun, banished him, com-

pelling him to become the wind, which blew upon the human folk and turned them into apes. Tlaloc, the rain-god, then took up the burden of the sun, being followed by his wife Chalchihuitlicue, at the end of whose term it rained so heavily that all the human race were turned into fishes.

The gods then established the heavens by making four men who upheld them by the aid of miraculous trees. Some of the other gods were then created, also a new breed of men. The gods then declared that war was necessary in order that blood might be obtained for the nourishment of the sun.

This myth, I am convinced, must have originated in one of those native priestly colleges which were so numerous in old Mexico. It bears every mark of hieratic invention. Not only does it " explain " the method of creation, but, what is much more important, it reveals the whole theological idea at the centre of the Aztec faith: that man was created especially for the purpose of keeping the gods alive, that, indeed, he was nothing but a beast of sacrifice whose blood nourished the elemental powers, and that this was his whole reason of being! The Mexican deities were as the tyrants of our modern world, who seek to pose and masquerade as demigods, and who draw their sustenance from the hearts of men!

The cosmological notions of the Mexican tribes thus appear to be chaotic, and the nature of the sources from which we draw them does not permit us to arrange them in chronological order, thus revealing their development in time. We are probably on safe ground if we accept the version symbolically set forth in the Calendar Stone of Mexico. We know also that Sahagun was in the habit of carefully comparing the myths he collected in any one district with those to be found in other parts of the country, and that he submitted them to the criticism of native experts, but he is perfunctory in his account of the creation. However, he agrees substantially

with Mendieta and Olmos so far as his facts go, and if we bracket these three accounts and collate them, and add to them the evidence of the Calendar Stone, we shall probably have a version on which we can depend.

Let us summarize these accounts:

Sahagun tells us that the world was framed by Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl, as sub-creative spirits.

Mendieta and Olmos give us the story of the birth of the gods from a flint knife. It mentions the manner in which man was created, and how the sun was formed.

Mendieta also tells us that Tezcatlipoca and Uitzilopochtli acted as " moulders " of the earth.

The Calendar Stone points to Tezcatlipoca as the first sun and Quetzalcoatl as the second.

The account given in *The History of the Mexicans From Their Paintings* is in partial agreement with the others.

All these accounts, then, allude to Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl—sometimes along with other gods—as the actual makers of the earth, the general view being that the older creative deities, Tonacatecutli and his wife, were the parents of these gods and inspired them to the making of the universe.

The remaining accounts, including that of *The History of the Mexicans From Their Paintings*, give me the decided impression that they were manufactured in priestly colleges in some area of the country at a much later period than the others, displaying as they do that hieratic manner of explanatory exposition which can scarcely be disguised. In all likelihood certain gods were introduced as creative beings because of their local importance. And we must regard it as probable that the simple story of the manufacture of the earth from the *Cipactli* dragon-beast, which represents possibly an even earlier and more barbaric version of the creation and is found as a part of the creation legend in some of

the later accounts, was never quite forgotten by the people and had to be embraced in the story by the myth-making priests for that reason, as it certainly was in *The History of the Mexicans From Their Paintings.*

Over and above this, other elements from various regions in Mexico make a sporadic appearance in nearly all these accounts, but we may regard the generalized version offered above as providing something in the nature of a standard or "official" creation-story.

The Aztecs had a Deluge or "Flood" myth of their own; indeed, they had several versions of such a legend. It seems probable that all of these originated in the belief concerning the "Water Sun," previously alluded to. The European interpreter of the *Codex Vaticanus* tells us that "most of the old people of Mexico say that a single man and a single woman escaped the deluge in a tree, or canoe, and that from these, in course of time, mankind multiplied." The "tree" in which they saved themselves was called *Ahuehuete.* This Mexican word means "the very old thing," but in this instance it is known to apply to the fir-tree, a familiar object in the higher mountain latitudes. For this reason I do not consider it as probable that the flood-myth in question is an echo of the Biblical story. Indeed, the sequel to the legend, as provided by the authority in question, makes it clear that it must have come from native sources, as it adds that seven other people who had hidden themselves in a cave survived and assisted in replenishing the earth—a myth to be found elsewhere among the races of America. Another flood-myth is provided in the *Annals of Quauhtitlan,* concerning a man Nata and his wife, Nena, whom the god Tezcatlipoca ordered to hollow out a great cypress tree as a mighty deluge was approaching. This version appears, I think, more suspect of Biblical influence. The name Nata does not seem to

be of Mexican origin, and might easily be a native borrowing of the Spanish " Noe," or " Noah," while the existence of a door in the cedar canoe, or ark, is a suspicious circumstance. Here it is necessary to remark that the flood-myth so frequently mentioned in certain books on Mexican history in connection with one Cox-cox, " the Mexican Noah," is a complete fabrication of later Spanish writers, based on a misinterpretation of certain Mexican paintings. Indeed, the fallacy was pointed out by Ramirez so long ago as 1858, and I merely mention it here to prevent further misapprehension regarding it.

We discover, too, in the literature of Mexican mythology a persistent story, or rather tantalizing traces, concerning a " fall " of the gods or god-like personages from grace, which recalls that of Adam and Eve as found in the Book of Genesis. Certain deities, we learn from the European interpreter of the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis*, dwelt in the western paradise of Tamoanchan. But they transgressed by plucking roses and branches from its sacred trees, and for doing so some were banished into the world of men, while others " went to hell." The chief figure in this story is the goddess Ixnextli, or Xochiquetzal (" Flower-Feather ") the Venus of Mexican mythology, who is frequently depicted in the native paintings as weeping for her offence, and who has been called " the Mexican Eve." It is not improbable that the European priestly interpreter of the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis*, in which her story appears, gave a Biblical turn to it. The original Tlascalan myth of this goddess, as given by Camargo in his *History of Tlascala*, states that Xochiquetzal was originally the wife of Tlaloc but was abducted from his paradise by the god Tezcatlipoca, who carried her off to the Nine Heavens and made her the Goddess of Love. The story recalls those of Proserpina and Eurydice rather than that of Eve; that is, it appears to be a myth explanatory of the affection of the Sun-god for

a goddess of florescence, just as was that of Proserpina of a god of the earth for a goddess of the grain. At the same time another myth about Xochiquetzal describes her as a sort of fairy queen, residing in a sphere strangely like Fairyland, and we know from many a fairy tale how perilous it was to pluck blossoms or boughs on fairy soil.

The Mexicans divided the universe into four regions, governed by four gods, who were supposed to uphold the skies at the four directions of the compass. According to Mr. J. Eric Thompson, one of the most acute and distinguished students of the Mexican past, these were Tlauizcalpantecutli, who upheld the eastern quarter, Otontecutli the northern, Quetzalcoatl the western, and Mictlantecutli the south. These compass-directions were associated with various colours, red, white, black, and yellow, the first and second being apportioned to their respective directions only tentatively by Mr. Thompson, as they vary in different parts of the same native paintings. These " sky-bearers " were supposed to be spirits or gods of the stars, who rushed earthward during eclipses of the sun and were baleful to mankind, inflicting upon it certain diseases. They were usually symbolized by insects, particularly scorpions, spiders, and bees. They were also associated with the only four days on which the Calendar could begin, *Acatl*, *Tecpatl*, *Calli*, and *Tochtli*. For further information respecting this rather obscure question I would refer the reader to Mr. Thompson's masterly essay: " Sky-Bearers, Colors and Directions in Maya and Mexican Religion " in *Contributions to American Archæology*, *No. 10*, published by the Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1934.

More than one paradise awaited the dead. Warriors slain in battle and sacrificed captives repaired to the House of the Sun, where they engaged in mock battles just as the slain heroes of Scandinavian myth are said to have done in the Valhalla of Odin. Offer-

ings made to them on earth duly arrived there, and after four years they were transformed into birds of rich plumage, which flitted from flower to flower, absorbing nectar-like juices. The rain-god, Tlaloc, presided over the paradise of Tlalocan, a beautiful region replete with fruits and vegetables of every description. But only those who had been drowned, or slain by lightning, or who had died from dropsy—all whose deaths had been caused through the agency of the watery powers—could enter this mountain Eden, situated in the east. Another paradise, Tamoanchan, was situated in the west, the place of the setting sun, and appears to have been identified as the special home of those gods associated with the maize-plant. It is frequently mentioned in the myths concerning them.

The abode of the Creator, Tonacatecutli, was known as *Homeyoca*, and appears to have consisted of three separate regions, the Red, the Yellow, and the White Heavens. But *The History of the Mexicans From Their Paintings* describes a more elaborate series of heavens, thirteen in number. The first contained certain planets; the second was the home of the Tzitzimime deities, or star-like insects, mentioned in the paragraph relating to the sky-supporters; the third that of the star-warriors, who carried sacrificial blood to the sun; the fourth of birds; the fifth of fire-snakes; the sixth was the home of the winds; the seventh harboured dust, and in the eighth dwelt the gods. The remaining five heavens constituted the mansions of Tonacatecutli and his spouse, the supreme creative deities.

The abode of death of the Nahua race was Mictlampa, presided over by Mictlantecutli, the lord of death. Towards this doleful place fared those who had not died in warfare. It was a vast and gloomy desert divided into nine regions, of which the innermost was the abode of the death-god. The journey thither was gruesome in the extreme, and passports were issued by the priests to mitigate its horrors and

to frank the soul past the various demons and ambushes it held, almost precisely as was the case in ancient Egypt. Clashing mountains might crush the deceased, snakes or alligators might devour him, a wind full of razor-sharp knives might envelop and torment him. Lastly he must cross a river on the back of a dog before he reached the court of the King of Terrors. This was "the place where the sun slept," in which circumstance it resembled the original Egyptian house of the dead. After four years in this horrible environment, the soul, it was thought, might win to comparative ease in a region of peace.

CHAPTER V

THE GREATER GODS OF MEXICO

AFTER a good deal of preliminary demonstration, which in the particular nature of the circumstances was unavoidable, we arrive at that part of our subject which deals with the high gods of the ancient Mexican religion, their myths, their worship, and their significance. In this chapter it is my intention to describe two gods who bulk most largely in the Mexican cultus and who may be called the national gods of Mexico—Uitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipoca. In one sense, indeed, these twain were regarded by the Mexicans as brothers, and certain of the painted manuscripts place them in a relationship to each other which seems to imply some kind of seasonal opposition, representing a favourable influence upon growth and its inauspicious contrast.

The careful examination of the appearance and insignia of all Mexican deities is a matter of importance because of the symbolic character of these details of costume and aspect. Many writers who have sought to describe the gods have quoted at length from the old Spanish authorities, but, as experience has taught me, the generality of these priestly accounts are garbled and inaccurate, and I have invariably found it much more useful and practical to seek aid in this respect from the illustrations of the gods in the native Mexican manuscripts, which were drawn by native artists who had a first-hand acquaintance with their symbolism.

The face-painting of both men and gods in primitive North America had a definite significance, tribal or individual, and we can usually glean from it more than a little respecting the status of a warrior or a divinity. The facial decoration of Uitzilopochtli was arranged in blue and yellow horizontal stripes,

the blue signifying his association with the sky, while the yellow symbolized the excrement of newly-born children, thus revealing his character as a very youthful and even infantile god. The paint which entirely covered the rest of his body was the heavenly cerulean. Sometimes he is seen wearing a mask of the deepest black, surrounded with little white dots, which was typical of the sky of night studded with stars.

His dress was generally a mantle of humming-bird's feathers—significant, as we shall see, of his name—while on his head he wears a *panache* or crown of feathers, sometimes those of the humming-bird and occasionally the plumes of the heron. It has been generally stated by modern writers (and this is of some importance) that his left leg was invariably tufted with feathers, but so far as I can ascertain only two writers, Torquemada and Clavigero, described it as being so, while none of the native paintings reveals any such feathering of the limb.

His weapons are a shield made of reeds, to which tufts of eagle's down adhere, arranged in the manner of a " five " of hearts or spades in a pack of cards, and he carries spears or javelins tipped with tufts of down instead of obsidian. Such weapons were used by those doomed to a gladiatorial death on the stone of sacrifice, sham weapons being distributed to those victims who went through a mock fight with their captors before they were immolated. Uitzilopochtli also bears an instrument known as " the fire-snake," which here takes the shape of a spear-thrower and symbolizes his association with the sun; and he carries a bow, of which weapon he is said to have been the inventor. These attributes are associated with what might be called his " standard " or ordinary equipment, but variations occur in certain of the representations of him, although his face-paint and other more salient characteristics are almost invariably constant.

Myths or tales concerning Uitzilopochtli are fairly

numerous, but space demands that these should be dealt with briefly. Even so, I shall omit no circumstance of importance. At Coatepec, near Tollan, dwelt a pious widow named Coatlicue, who, while she was praying in the temple, observed a ball of brightly coloured feathers floating in the air quite close to her. Attracted by its brilliant hues, she placed it in her bosom, and later realized that she was about to become a mother. Her sons, the Centzon Uitznaua, or " Four Hundred Southerners "—that is, the stars of the Southern Hemisphere—and their sister, Coyolxauhqui, humiliated by this, abused her and resolved to slay her. But as they were about to do so Uitzilopochtli was born, attired in the full panoply of a warrior. He shattered his contumacious sister with one blow of the fire-snake, and, pursuing his brethren, slew most of them, while others were drowned in a neighbouring lake in attempting to escape. The story has been explained as the rout of the stars at the rising of the sun, the sister representing the moon, which is " destroyed " or " shattered " upon the appearance of the greater luminary.

The History of the Mexicans From Their Paintings says that Uitzilopochtli was the fourth and youngest son of the creative gods Tonacatecutli and Tonacaciuatl, his elder brothers being the Red Tezcatlipoca, the Black Tezcatlipoca, and Quetzalcoatl. " He was born without flesh, but with bones, and thus he remained for six hundred years, in which nothing else was made, neither the gods nor their father," which simply means that during this period he was spirit and not flesh, the bones being regarded by savage peoples as basic and indestructible. Boturini declares that he was a tribal captain of the Mexicans and, because of his bravery, was translated to the heavens and became a god; Sahagun speaks of him as a kind of Hercules, terrible to his adversaries, and a great wizard who was able to transform himself into the shapes of different birds and beasts. Torquemada

tells us that he was a sorcerer who had led the Mexicans from their own land to the lake Valley. After his translation to godhead, says another account, he guided the Aztecs to the western shore of Lake Tezcuco, where, in an island among the marshes, they found a stone on which, forty years before, one of their priests had sacrificed a prince whom the Aztecs had captured. A *nopal* plant had sprung from an earth-filled crevice in this rude altar, and upon this an eagle alighted, grasping in its talons a huge serpent. This appeared to the Aztecs as a good omen, and on the spot they founded the city of Mexico-Tenochtitlan. The eagle grasping the serpent and perched on the stone still remains the national badge of the Mexican Republic.

The chief festival of Uitzilopochtli was that known as *Panquetzalitztli*, which was held at the time of the winter solstice, after which Nature resumed its function of growth. The captives about to be sacrificed to the god were painted with his face-paint and left the impress of their hands in black on the gate-posts of those who had captured them. With the dawn of day, the god Paynal, the herald of Uitzilopochtli, who represented the morning star, was supposed to descend to his temple. The idol of the god was then carried to certain places in the environs of Mexico, where some of the captives were slain. The procession crossed the hill of Chapultepec, during which time the captives about to die engaged in a sham fight. They were opposed by the devotees of Uitzilopochtli, after which a race was run, the goal being the summit of the god's temple. The warriors, arrived there, deposited the idol in its usual place, and then cut up an image of Uitzilopochtli, made of maize-paste, which they duly divided. More captives were then sacrificed, and the people returned homeward, where festivities were held. One of the most important rites at this festival was the burning of certain pieces of *agave* parchment in a vessel, these being set on fire by means of the

" fire-snake," Uitzilopochtli's particular weapon. The festival was certainly a solar fire-feast associated with the season when the sun has travelled farthest to the south and the forces of dearth are about to give precedence to the powers of growth. The sham fight between the doomed prisoners and the warriors of Uitzilopochtli probably symbolized his battle with the " Four Hundred Southerners," the stars, and the conquest of the light of day over the darkness of night.

The great temple of Uitzilopochtli at Mexico City was the chief shrine of this god. Within recent years its foundations have been excavated by Manuel Gamio and others. Its summit was reached by a flight of 340 steps, which circled round its terraces and led to the summit, and this was flanked by balustrades formed of great stone snakes. Side by side on the level platform at the top stood two shrines in which were disposed the idols of Uitzilopochtli and Tlaloc, the god of rain, actually the deities of the new and old regimes, the Aztec and Toltec. The *teocalli*, or temple, was enclosed in an immense courtyard, which contained various subsidiary temples, such as that of Coatlicue, the mother of the god. Within this area, the walls of which had a circumference of 4,800 feet, were also situated spacious floors for the ceremonial dances which were a feature of the ritual of the festivals. Here, too, were the barracks known as the " Hall of the Warriors of the Eagle " (the corps of " knights " especially dedicated to the service of Uitzilopochtli), the dwellings of the priests, and the stone on which the sacrificial victims took up a position when engaged in the mock fight with their captors. In front of the temple rose a horrid trellis or rack, filled with the skulls of those who had been sacrificeed. Most of the Spanish colonial writers allude to this trophy with disgust, being evidently quite unconscious that the *autos da fé* of their own rather primitive Church, which doomed hundreds of " heretics " to

the flames annually, were hardly in the nature of an advance upon the sanguinary ritual of the Aztecs.

Most modern writers, when dealing with the nature and significance of Uitzilopochtli, translate his name as meaning either "Humming-bird-to-the-Left," or "Humming-bird-of-the-South," the Mexicans regarding the South as on the sun's left side or "hand." Some lay stress on the humming-bird feathers with which, as one or two old writers aver, his left leg is adorned, and they not infrequently derive his name from this symbolic circumstance. If Uitzilopochtli's name was ever associated with these leg-feathers—or, rather, the feathers with it—it was in virtue of the pictorial punning, or rebus-writing, in which the native painters indulged after the manner of their kind. Such a picture, displaying the god with a feathering upon his left leg, would of course have "read" as "humming-bird on the left," after the manner of Aztec picture-writing. But we must not accept Mexican picture-writing as anything else than what it is—that is, a primitive means of conveying names, and it should not be taken as revealing the nature of the gods it depicts. At the same time the leading characteristics of the Aztec gods are not infrequently displayed in their leg-gear, as I have made plain elsewhere.

Those who have sought to unravel the significance of this deity have further identified him as a tribal god of the Aztecs and also as a god of the sun and of fire, in all of which they are indubitably correct. But the confusion resulting from his name, together with the lack of an examination sufficiently searching and incisive into the etymology of this nomenclature, has resulted in a kind of stalemate concerning his functions and characteristics.

My own belief is that Uitzilopochtli was *originally* associated with the *maguey* plant, precisely as Apollo was connected with the apple and Bacchus with the vine, as some of his lesser names appear to show.

One of the varieties of this plant, the *metl*, was known to the Aztecs as " the beak of the humming-bird " because of the resemblance of its thorns to the long, sharp bill of that little bird. The humming-bird suspends its web-like nest from the leaves of the plant in question, and Uitzilopochtli is also associated with the *maguey* by some of his subsidiary names. For instance, one of them, " Magueycoatl," means " Serpent of the *Maguey* "; while another, " Mexitli," is translatable as " Hare of the *Maguey*." Still another signifies " Uitznauatl," or " Thorn which speaks oracularly." Occasionally, too, the element " *Uitzil* " in his name is depicted in the native paintings by a *maguey* plant.

The second element in his title, " *Opochtli*," certainly means both " South " and " Left "; but it also means " Wizard," and indeed Torquemada states that some persons derived the god's name from that word, combined with " *Uitzilinin*," " a humming-bird." In all likelihood the humming-bird, nesting as it did in the *maguey*-plant, would come to be regarded as the form in which the spirit of the *maguey* made its appearance. It was in the shape of a humming-bird that the god led the Aztecs to the Mexican Valley, and his usual costume is almost invariably the humming-bird mantle.

I believe, then, that the name originally implied " Humming-bird Wizard." Sahagun speaks of Uitzilopochtli as " a necromancer and friend of disguises," and wizards are universally regarded as " sinister " or " malign," which in many languages is expressed by the term " the left hand " (*sinistra*, in Latin). Further, the liquor distilled from the *maguey* induced prophetic or oracular inspiration, and this heightened the notion of his magical potency.

But in later times he came to possess a very different significance. He is certainly the sun in one of its phases. Uitzilopochtli, as the spirit of the *maguey* plant, was the tribal fetish of the Aztecs, and therefore

their leader in battle. It was by warfare only that the sun was provided with the human hearts necessary to its existence. Uitzilopochtli thus became identified with the sun in a certain sense. The fiery liquor *octli*, distilled from this plant, the *maguey*, symbolized heat or flame. The brilliantly-plumaged hummingbird is typically associated with the sun. Thus all these circumstances became woven into one myth concerning Uitzilopochtli. Among many of the North American Indian tribes, too, the hare is emblematic of the sun-god. In the same manner he is identified with the serpent, which had also a solar significance and was likewise associated with the wizard or magician, possibly because of its subtlety. And, lastly, as the sun, he was looked upon as the great promoter of all plant-growth, as is witnessed to by the circumstances of his chief festival, which was celebrated at the first rainfall of the year. He is thus the sun of the season of plenty, as his brother, Tezcatlipoca, represents that of sereness and drought.

In America the idea of twin gods standing in opposition to each other as good and evil deities is perhaps more widely dispersed than in other areas, and particularly was this the case in British Columbia, a region from which, some authorities believe, the Nahua people may originally have come. The Tsimshian Indians of British Columbia still believe that the twins of the wind and the rain control the weather. In some of the native manuscripts Tezcatlipoca is represented as confronting his brother Uitzilopochtli in such a posture as to imply opposition or that dualism which symbolized "good" and "evil."

His face-painting resembles that of Uitzilopochtli, consisting of black stripes upon a yellow ground. His hair is ornamented with feather-down balls, the plumage of the solar eagle, indicating his sacrificial character, and he wears a tunic covered with stellar devices, revealing his association with night. He

sometimes bears the smoking mirror symbolic of his name, and which is not only typical of the dry, hot season, but does duty as a glass in which he beholds the actions of mankind. Among his insignia is the ocelot-skin pouch or purse, in which the priests carried *copal* gum, which they burnt in incense. His nose is usually transfixed by a blue " nose-plug," revealing his aerial associations, and he has a lame foot.

Tezcatlipoca took two definite forms, the Black and the Red. The latter is actually a variant of the god Xipe, a deity of sacrifice whose identity will be described at a later stage. The further significance of these two forms will also be explained when we come to deal with the nature of Tezcatlipoca.

A number of myths clustered around the personality of Tezcatlipoca. It was said that he wandered over the earth, stirring up strife and war. He was excessively capricious and vengeful, as one of his names, " Yaotl," " the enemy," seems to indicate. His lameness had been caused by the doors of the Underworld prematurely closing upon one of his feet. It was thought that he could penetrate into all places. The reader will recall that he has already appeared in the creative myths as one of the makers of the earth, and as taking his turn at acting as the sun.

One myth concerning him appears to be associated with the Nahuan displacement of the Toltecs. Tezcatlipoca is said to have driven the Toltec god Quetzalcoatl from the land, and to have employed every stratagem to undermine the Toltec power. Assuming the form of a beautiful youth, he beguiled the daughter of the Toltec king into marriage. The Toltecs, filled with jealousy, deserted him in battle, but, leading the weakest men in the host, he succeeded in defeating the enemy. Later he invited the Toltecs to a great feast. Panic suddenly overtook them, and they fled. But a stone bridge on the road they took gave way beneath them, and in falling they were transformed into rocks and stones. By these and other stratagems he suc-

ceeded in decimating the Toltec folk. These myths, I believe, were invented to explain how the gods of the invading Nahua gradually ousted the native deities of the Toltecs, as well as the manner in which the Toltecs, like the Picts of Scottish folk-lore, were said to have "disappeared," when indeed they were merely absorbed into the Nahua population.

Tezcatlipoca was in the habit of wandering along the highways by night. Should anyone grapple with and overcome him, he might ask whatever boon he desired. We find stories similar to this in all mythologies and in folk-lore, where occasionally men overcome gods or demons in a struggle and demand boons from them before releasing them. He appeared in phantom guises to the nightbound wayfarer. He is indeed the great haunting presence, scaring and terrifying mankind "for his sport." Sometimes he seems to have taken the form of a wer-jaguar, or of an ominous night-bird, which uttered foreboding cries. Sahagun remarks that the many shapes he assumed were intended to frighten the people, who certainly went in the greatest terror of him. Among the disguises he took was that of a huge spider, a form which classes him along with those Tzitzimime spirits, already alluded to as associated with the stars, who were supposed to take various insect shapes and descend upon humanity during an eclipse, bringing plagues and drought.

Tezcatlipoca's festivals were undoubtedly the most important in the calendar-round. The most outstanding of his ceremonies was that known as *Toxcatl*, held about the end of April, which has certainly received its due meed of description and interpretation at the hands of writers on Comparative Religion. It took place in the fifth "month" of the calendar, and for its central figure the most distinguished man among the captives was selected. He received a special training in personal deportment, in music, and the "polite" taking of tobacco. He was attended

by eight pages, was regaled with every dainty, and, as the representative of Tezcatlipoca, was entreated like royalty itself, wearing, of course, the attire and insignia of the god. Five days before the festival he held a magnificent banquet for the nobility. On the day of his sacrifice he entered a canoe, accompanied by the four wives to whom he had been ceremonially married, who represented various goddesses. After crossing the lake, he bade them farewell, broke his instruments of music, and was then immolated on the summit of the temple. At the close of this festival a youthful captive who had undergone a similar training was also sacrificed to Uitzilopochtli. On the twelfth month the *Teotleco*, another festival to Tezcatlipoca, was celebrated, at which he was said to arrive first of all the gods because of his youth and strength. The *Toxcatl* festival, of course, constituted the drama of the god, whose earthly representative must perish annually to ensure new vitality to his divine counterpart. That this particular ceremony has an important bearing on the subject of the sacrifice of the divine king, who represented the god and enacted his drama, I am more than convinced.

The earlier significance of Tezcatlipoca is certainly associated with his status as a spirit of the obsidian stone. I have already explained how and why obsidian was revered as a species of fetish by the early Nahuas. In his fundamental form Tezcatlipoca was the god or indwelling spirit of the obsidian stone *par excellence*. Some of his idols seem to have been carved from obsidian, and in certain manuscripts he has an obsidian knife in place of a foot, a symbolic or hieroglyphic index of his basic character. I think, too, that the network garment he sometimes wears is nothing but the mesh-bag in which the Nahua hunter carried his obsidian blades. Obsidian was known to the Nahua as *tezcat*, and from it highly polished mirrors were made, in which sorcerers were wont to gaze in order to induce visions or omens. Tezcatli-

poca's name means " Smoking Mirror," which in one sense is, I think, explanatory of the haziness which is supposed to cloud the surface of a divinatory glass preparatory to visions being seen in its depths.

Tezcatlipoca, of all Mexican deities, is the most closely connected with the art and tradition of sorcery. As a god of the obsidian stone he is associated with the wind, and the stone he ensouls is therefore connected with that class of fetish which is regarded as capable of raising a tempest under the spell of the sorcerer. His caprice and freakish bad temper connect him with the wind in its more boisterous form. He represents, in one of his guises, bad or tempestuous weather. In the Aztec mind the obsidian knife is thought of as the symbol of the punishment of sin, the instrument of justice; so he is also the avenger, the deity of the condign punishment for all misdeeds, the Mexican Nemesis.

But Tezcatlipoca was in a later sense the god of the dry season of sereness. He typified the sun when it stood at the zenith above Mexico, causing sunstroke and acute discomfort. His flaming mirror is the sun of the torrid days of midsummer, when the land groans under the merciless solar rays and drought is its portion. His red and black forms probably signify the heavens of day and of night, the season of sorcery, or they may, alternatively, have reference to the blaze of midsummer and the dull cloudiness of the rainy season; for, if he chose, he could send rain in plenty, as certain prayers offered up to him reveal.

As a god of the wind or of the heavenly spaces, he further came to be regarded as the breath of life, and as such he is capable of being compared with many another deity in American Indian mythology. This notwithstanding, he was primarily considered as the inexorable death-dealer, " The Hungry Chief " and " The Enemy." His title of " The Youthful Warrior," however, makes it plain that there was another side to his character, creative, vital, life-giving.

In short, we must regard this manifold and complex figure as a species of Mexican Zeus who, in the course of time, attracted to himself practically all the qualities of godhead. His worship or cult, by the period of the Spanish Conquest, had achieved such importance, and indeed pre-eminence, that he had come to be regarded as the most powerful deity in the Nahua pantheon, surpassing in this respect even the tribal god Uitzilopochtli. Indeed, I think it probable that, as the god of the obsidian weapon, he preceded Uitzilopochtli in the religious history of the Nahua. The latter god, as the spirit of the *maguey* plant and as associated with the humming-bird, could scarcely have achieved much predominance until the Nahua hunting tribes had entered a more southerly latitude, whereas obsidian and its " magical " qualities must have been familiar to them long before they did so. Of course I do not stress this view, but there is certainly no question as to the relative importance of these deities, and the circumstance that Tezcatlipoca was thought to have taken the chief part in the destruction of the Toltec race seems to make it clear that he was looked upon as the more important deity of the twain, racially speaking.

CHAPTER VI

THE GODS OF GROWTH

ALTHOUGH I have entitled this chapter "The Gods of Growth," it would scarcely be accurate to regard the deities with which it deals as forming anything in the nature of an official or mythological group. True, some of them were said to be related to one another as mother and daughter or mother and son, but this relationship may have been derived from later folk-lore or priestly invention. One thing we certainly know, and that is that all of these goddesses of cereal growth—for the majority of them were female—had originally been worshipped by tribes more or less remote from one another. The circumstances that they possess almost the self-same appearance, that their cults scarcely differed in ritual, and that the few myths concerning them closely resemble each other, seem to point to the probability that they had all been derived from one original parent form, just as we find the Great Mother of the Mediterranean area branching out in such numerous guises as Cybele, Aphrodite, Diana, Ashtoreth or Astarte, Demeter, and so forth.

But before we seek to arrive at conclusions regarding these many-sided goddesses of growth whom the ancient Mexicans worshipped with such meticulous respect to ritual celebration, it will be essential to devote some considerable attention to the details of the symbolism, myths, and festivals associated with each of them separately, so far as this is possible in the space at our disposal.

If we make a beginning with the ancient goddess known as Tlazolteotl ("Goddess of Dirt") it is because she appears to combine a good many of the elements common to the whole class. She had a

large variety of subsidiary names, the most popular of which, perhaps, were Teteoinnan (" Mother of the Gods ") and Tlaelquani (" Filth-Eater "), which, however seemingly incongruous, in a sense describe her outstanding qualities. One of her distinguishing characteristics is a black colouring about the region of the mouth, which sometimes includes the tip of the nose and chin. She is usually painted white, or yellow, the colour of the maize-plant at various stages in its growth, and a disc of rubber with a perforated centre appears on her cheek—a symbol of sex, also to be observed in some other goddesses. She frequently wears a cotton fillet, thus revealing her association with the cotton-plant, and sometimes this is stuck full of spindles, allegorical of her connection with weaving. But it is chiefly as a maize-goddess that she appears to have been worshipped. In a few pictures she carries a broom made of stiff grass, the hieroglyphic of her festival, the *Ochpanitzli*, as we shall see.

Tlazolteotl is said in one myth to have come from the land of the Huaxtecs, on the eastern coast of Mexico. But she is a rather complicated figure. Her great festival, the *Ochpanitzli* (" When they sweep the Ways "), was held in the eleventh Aztec month, about the middle of September. Before its celebration a great deal of dancing was indulged in by the women who practised medicine, the midwives and others, for the purpose of amusing the wretched girl-victim who was to be sacrificed to the goddess, to calm her fears and to distract her mind from the fate which awaited her. When at last she was carried to the temple where she was to be immolated, she sowed maize on every side. So that she might maintain a cheerful spirit she was told that she was to become the bride of the king and was attired in the full regalia of the goddess. This seems to point to a ritual marriage between the king and a representative of the goddess of the soil, such as appears to have

taken place in ancient Egypt and Rome, and, as recent researches of mine lead me to believe, was also prevalent in Ireland in early times. Nor is it the only Mexican symptom of this rite, which appears to have travelled far and wide from its Egyptian source.

The unhappy maiden was then hoisted upon the shoulders of a priest, in the manner in which prospective brides were borne to their nuptials, and before she could have suspected what was about to happen, was swiftly beheaded and flayed.

A piece of skin was especially removed from the thigh and was carried to the temple of Cinteotl, the son of Tlazolteotl. The skin of the upper part of the body was formed into a jacket which a priest of the goddess drew on. Thus attired, and attended by men dressed as the servants of the goddess, he rushed upon a band of warriors, who fled before him. He then climbed to the top of the *teocalli* of Uitzilopochtli, where he simulated Tlazolteotl herself and went through a pantomime of enacting the conception and birth of her son, Cinteotl, the young maize. The priest who took the part of Cinteotl then placed over his face a mask made from the skin of the thigh of the sacrificed girl, and on his head he wore a cap of the same horrid material, which had a crest like the comb of a cock. The grisly priest then adorned himself in the full panoply of Tlazolteotl. Captives were sacrificed and a warlike procession was marshalled.

This marched to the frontiers of Mexico, where a small hut stood in which the mask and cap of Cinteotl were placed. I should like to indicate how closely these proceedings resemble those which took place at the annual festival of Mars, the war-god, in ancient Rome. The same sham combat was gone through, and a spear was cast over the city boundary. The intention appears to have been the same, for Mars was certainly a god of agriculture and the earth, as well as of war. In Mexico the proceedings con-

cluded with a great review, at which the king distributed honours and insignia to those who had proved themselves worthy of them. Maize seeds were scattered upon the heads of the multitude below, and the maidens who served Chicomecoatl, another maize goddess, formed a procession, each bearing a sheaf of seven ears of maize wrapped in a rich mantle.

But Tlazoteotl was regarded also as the goddess of sexual indulgence, a rôle not inappropriate to the wild and wanton deity of the earth. Rather strangely, however, it was believed that she could also pardon its excesses, if a full confession of them were proffered. This was usually done late in life, for absolution could be given only once in a person's career.

It is scarcely possible to regard Tlazolteotl as otherwise than a personification of the maize-plant, or as the spirit of the maize. She is alluded to in her hymns as "the yellow bloom," and "the white bloom," and her association with the plant is further revealed by references to her as dwelling in Tamoanchan, the western paradise, where the plant was supposed to have had its mythical origin, and where she gave birth to Cinteotl, the young maize-god. We must also take into consideration her title of Tlalli Iyallo, "Heart of the Earth," as symbolic of the fact that she was its heart, soul, or vivifying influence, the indwelling genius which made the maize grow—a name which gives us the impression of a power actually conferring life upon the maize-plant, forcing it upward, compelling its blossoming. Thus, as the power or essence, the female vigour, which made for its birth, she very naturally acquired in the savage mind the character of a spirit of great fecundity and therefore of lustful capacity and excess.

She was also, in this character, the queen and patroness of the Mexican witches, the terrible Ciuateteo. These were, in their original form, women who had died in child-bed, and as such were

regarded as the equals of heroes who had perished in battle, accompanying the sun in his afternoon course. Accordingly, she is the great mother-witch and medicine-wife, and in the *Codex Vaticanus B* she is represented as standing beside a house which, like that of Mother Goose, has an owl for its sentinel and from the eaves of which hang medicinal herbs. She is the genius of human birth, as were the mediæval French and later Slavonic fairies, and presides over the child-bed. And she has a connection with the moon. Indeed, if we compare her with one or other of the ancient Celtic or Hellenic forms of goddesses from which the later fairies appear to have taken their origin, we are compelled to the conclusion that out of such forms many of the shapes of folk-lore must have issued.

Chicomecoatl (" Seven Snake ") is also a maize-goddess of importance. She has a red body and face-painting and wears a large paper crown with three peaks or points. Sometimes she holds a double ear of maize, and her dress is symbolically covered with spring flowers. As we have seen, her rites had a part in the *Ochpaniztli* festival, and, as she was a Mexican deity, the probability is that her worship was an older one in the Mexican plateau than that of Tlazolteotl, whose cult would appear to have displaced it to some extent but not sufficiently to have altogether thrust it aside. Moreover, she had a festival of her own, the *Uei Tozoztli*, or " Great Watch," so called because the people sat up all night in their houses to celebrate it. Even this occasion, however, she shared with Cinteotl in a certain degree. After a four-days' fast, rushes were dipped in sacrificial blood and set before the images of the gods in both house and temple. The people strolled through the fields, plucking stalks of the young maize, and decking them with flowers. These they placed upon the altars of the gods, along with offerings of food, among which a cooked frog was prominent. On the

back of each frog, which symbolized the earth, was a small basket of maize-stalk filled with every kind of food, these samples symbolizing the different fruits which the earth brought forth.

All these provisions were, later in the day, carried to the temple of Chicomecoatl and eaten at a sort of general picnic. The folk then returned to their houses, and sanctified maize was deposited in every granary and corn-crib, remaining there until it was used as seed. It comes rather as a surprise that no human sacrifice was engaged in at this festival.

Chicomecoatl was the indigenous maize-deity of the Mexican plateau. Sahagun describes her as " the goddess of subsistence " and " the original maker of bread and victuals and cookery in general." It seems probable that she came, latterly, to occupy the position of the old grain-mother, while Tlazolteotl was regarded as the younger goddess of maize, just as Persephone, in Greece, was recognized as the daughter of Kore, or Ceres, the " corn-mother." It seems likely that folk in an agricultural condition of life may have gradually come to discriminate between the goddess of grain of the old season and that of the grain to come, the first of whom yielded the maize or wheat used for seed, while the younger represented the spirit of the maize, or grain as yet unborn or which had not come to fruition. Such a condition of things was, until recently, known in Scotland, where the agricultural folk discriminated between the two, the " old wife " being represented by the sheaf of the last season, while the " kirn-baby " stood for the new.

Strangely enough, few myths concerning these Mexican deities of maize have come down to us. But the place of myths is taken to some extent by hymns in their praise, which were carefully gathered by the indefatigable Sahagun. Thus the yellow-painted maize-god Cinteotl, who wears an angular black band on his face and bears a load of maize-

ears upon his back, is celebrated in a rather obscure hymn which describes him as answering the song of the flower-god Xochipilli, which is as much as to say that he echoes the song of spring. He is the god of the thigh-skin mask, alluded to in the pages dealing with the festival of the *Ochpanitzli*.

At the festival of the *Uei Tozoztli*, sacred to Chicomecoatl, Cinteotl was also particularly worshipped. Originally he seems to have been the maize-god of the Totonacs, a people racially allied to the Maya-speaking Huaxtecs of the east coast. How he came to be regarded as the son of the maize-goddess is by no means clear, but we know at least that such relationships are not infrequently the invention of poets, who elaborate myths, or that they are conceived by the folk themselves. In any case the ascription appears to have been an ancient one, and as Tlazolteotl signified sin, so her son Cinteotl symbolizes the death by the knife of sacrifice which usually followed upon misdemeanour in Mexico, for the earth is the " mother " of stone. But chiefly he represented the young maize in its half-ripened condition.

An even more forbidding shape than any of the preceding deities of grain was Ciuacoatl (" Serpent Woman "). In some of the Codices she is represented with a face resembling that of a skeleton, noseless and having exposed teeth, while her long hair streams from under the feather plumes with which her head is decorated. The Sahagun manuscript describes and illustrates her as having a face painted half-red, half-black, with a crown of eagle's feathers. In one of her hands she holds what I take to be the wooden implement used in guiding the strands of cotton while stretched on the loom—in any case it is of the accepted form and is marked with the V-shaped hieroglyph denoting " cotton." At the same time, this implement may be, as others hold, the " rain-rattle," carried by many of the earth-gods.

In one of the songs or hymns to her contained in the Sahagun collection we discover the native outlook upon this goddess. This pictures her as reclining beneath the high cypress trees of the Chalmecan land, a sacred environment. The maize has appeared and in her hand she bears the rattle-staff, with which she mimics the heavy patter of tropical rain in order to bring it down by sympathetic magic upon the growing plants. In this passage, too, the god Mixcoatl is alluded to as her son; that is, he represents the lightning-flash which accompanies rainfall in Mexico. Her warlike nature is then described.

> " Morning has dawned.
> The order to the warriors has gone forth.
> Drag the captives hence.
> The whole land shall be destroyed.
> The deer from Colhuacan,
> She is covered with feathers.
> Those who fight bravely in war
> Are painted with eagle-feathers."

Ciuacoatl appears to have been identified with the two-headed deer, a mythical animal frequently associated with the worship of the nomadic Chichimecs or Nahua, as was Mixcoatl, her son. Thus as a goddess of subsistence she may have been originally a deity of the deer-cult who was later transformed into a maize-goddess. She is decorated with eagle's down, like the successful warrior who captured an enemy for the sacrifice. The song is eloquent of the connection of the earth-cult of the agricultural economy with war and human sacrifice, for the Aztecs believed that without the blood shed in that sacrifice rain would not fall and therefore the maize would not grow. Cuiacoatl is spoken of by Sahagun and Duran as a warrior goddess who gave the Mexicans victory over their enemies, and by the friar Torquemada as the elder sister of the Mimixcoa, the stars. We have other allusions to her in myth, however, for

she it was who pounded the human bones brought by Quetzalcoatl from the Underworld into a paste from which men were formed. This was an allegory of the manner in which man was supposed to have been " built up " of maize.

This supernatural woman prepared the " paste " which was to make man out of the dead bones of another generation, in the same manner as the Mexican housewife made, and still makes, a maize-paste for cooking *tamales*, or pancakes, on a stone slab. And so, man, made from paste, must go on subsisting upon maize paste, his natural pabulum, or perish. Such is savage logic. Nor was that logic far wrong when we consider the bone-making qualities of cereal products.

But Ciuacoatl could also dispense bad fortune, poverty, and misery, just as do the fairies. Like the banshee of Ireland and Scotland, she appeared occasionally in the guise of a richly dressed lady wandering through the night, howling and bellowing. It is in such primitive figures that the mythologist meets the later shapes of popular folk-lore face to face.

Even more sinister was the guise of Ciuacoatl as mother. Sometimes men saw her carrying a cradle, and when she vanished no infant could be found therein, but only an obsidian knife, such as was used in human sacrifice.

Ciuacoatl's guise as a semi-skeleton justifies the belief that she had Underworld characteristics and was associated with the realm of the dead, a familiar connection for a deity of grain and growth. That she had a magical influence over the plantation and growth of the maize-plant, as the dead were supposed to have in all lands, is clear enough. Her warlike nature is also apparent. That she had originally been a deity of the Northern and immigrant Chichimec tribes is plain. Her connection with childbirth is also obvious, as the midwife invariably exhorted

the woman in child-bed to be strong and valiant, as was Ciuacoatl, " who first bore children." This is in allusion to a myth mentioned by Gama and Clavigero, who tell us that she gave birth to two children, male and female, from whom the human race was descended. The chief centres of her worship in Mexico were at Colhuacan and Xochimilco.

The goddess Coatlicue (" Serpent-Skirt ") is of importance as the mother of the great god Uitzolopochtli. Her face was completely covered with chalk. She wore a crown of eagle's feathers and an overdress of pure white cotton, but, as her name implies, her skirt was formed of interwoven serpents. A great statue of her, now housed in the National Museum at Mexico City, formerly stood at one of the entrances to the great temple of Mexico. Various authorities assigned it to different goddesses, but it undoubtedly represents Coatlicue and none other. At the same time it appears, to me at least, to be a figure composed of all the general attributes of the rain-and-earth goddesses. The head and face are made up from those of two serpents, or dragons, with enormous tusks, recalling those of Tlaloc, and the hands, or paws, sprout fearsome claws. The skirt of interwoven serpents is very apparent, while the upper part of the body is covered with the flayed skin of a sacrificed woman, whose breasts and hands dangle from it gruesomely. A skull is attached to the middle, and the feet and legs are scaly, like those of a dragon. Other statues and paintings of Coatlicue support the theory that it is she who is represented by this horrible idol. In some of them she is depicted as having the face of a skull, as wearing a peculiar headdress with maize-like *motifs* depending from the back, and earrings made from plugs of cotton. But a relief of her found on the site of the Temple of Uitzilopochtli, at Mexico City, shows her as wearing a crown of stone knives, the characteristic serpent-skirt, and the claws of a jaguar.

With her myth we are already familiar. Her only festival of importance appears to have been the *Tlacaxipeuiliztli*, when flowers were offered to her and music was made during the entire day. These flowers were the gifts of the master florists, and no blooms in their gardens might be smelt until these blossoms were offered up. From all this it might seem that this goddess typified the flower-covered earth of spring, whose garment, the serpent-skirt, symbolized the rain which then descends to clothe the soil as with a glittering robe. In essence, too, she would appear to be the earth in its ancient dragon-shape, and her mythical abode on a mountain would seem to favour this view. But the whole conception of her, as I have said, is a highly complicated one and it appears to me as a species of " portmanteau " conception of the earth-monster as a rain-and-growth deity of a generalized type. That she was associated with the Tlalocs at the festival of *Tozoztontli* shows that she must at one time have been closely connected with the rain-cult.

A more delicate idea appears in the form of the goddess Xochiquetzal (" Flower Feather "). She is usually painted in very gay attire, wearing a variegated garment and a shawl of sparkling emerald colour. Her hair is twisted in " horns," like that of the Zapotec women. Occasionally she wears a wreath of flowers. Sometimes the face is painted in squares, filled with small spots, perhaps representative of garden-plots, and at times she is seen carrying a child. Occasionally, too, she is represented as sitting opposite the rain-god Tlaloc, and in a few pictures she carries a sceptre of water-rushes, symbolical of her association with verdure.

In a hymn to her, Xochiquetzal is made to say that she comes from the fruitful supernatural land of Tamoanchan, the region of mist and rain in the West, where the maize-plant was thought to have had its origin. The remainder of the song appears to hold

the memory of some such myth as we find in the story of Orpheus and Eurydice:

> " The pious Piltzintecutli weeps.
> He seeks Xochiquetzal;
> To the land of corruption I must go."

Here we are told that Piltzintecutli, the Sun-god, has gone in quest of Xochiquetzal, the Goddess of Flowers, who, the season of blossoming over, must seek the Underworld. The resemblance to the myths of Orpheus and that of Persephone, both of which treat of the wanderings of spring or corn goddesses and the search for them, is manifest. Xochiquetzal seems to be identified with that Ixnextli, the Mexican Eve, of whom I have spoken, who was expelled from Paradise for plucking a flower therein. Indeed a picture of Ixnextli in the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis* is labelled " Xochiquetzal." But the only mention of this is contained in a European record and is thus suspect.

Camargo describes Xochiquetzal as being the same as Venus, and says that she lived, attended by many other women of the rank of goddesses, above the Nine Heavens in a delectable region with fountains, brooks, and flower-gardens. In her following she had a great many dwarfs, hunchbacks, jesters, and buffoons, who entertained her with music and dancing and who acted as her messengers. The chief activities of these folk were the spinning and weaving of artistic fabrics and the making of fine paintings. The paradise they inhabited was known as Tamoanchan—at least that is the abbreviated form for a name consisting of sixty letters, which implies " the House of the Descent " (or " of birth "), " the Place where the flowers are, the ninefold enchained, the Place of the fresh, cool winds." Formerly, we are told, she had been the wife of Tlaloc, but she had been abducted by the jealous Tezcatlipoca, who carried her to the Nine Heavens and made her the goddess of love—

rather obviously a later myth, redolent of the same trend of thought as we find in the tale of the rape of Persephone.

Now we find in this myth the self-same elements as in that of the traditional fairy queen—residence in a place of enchanting beauty, a rout of dwarfs and curiously deformed folk, much spinning and weaving, and so forth. We also discover Xochiquetzal as the seducer and temptress of holy men, or hermits, quite in the manner of the *larva*, nymph, or fairy. Indeed I was the first writer to reveal the resemblance of this side of her character to Buddhist tales of a similar type.

Xochiquetzal's chief festival was that of *Chicome-xochitl* (" Seven Flower "), at which the artists united in supplications for such inspiration as would permit them to achieve " a better quality of pictures." One sometimes wishes that their modern successors would follow their example in this respect! This period in the calendar was associated also with the ghostly women, or dead witches, the Ciuateteo, to whom I have already alluded—" the Mexican witches," as the Spanish friars dubbed them. So that here we find witch and fairy ideas in association, as indeed we so frequently do in mediæval folk-lore.

At the festival of the *Quecholli*, in the " month " of that name (which was sacred also to Mixcoatl), the occasion on which a great game-drive was made, numbers of young women were sacrificed to Xochi-quetzal " to the honour of love." Many of these were prostitutes who, before being immolated, dragged the " honest " women through the mire, subjecting them to the foulest abuse. Children also seem to have been sacrificed to her and to the Tlalocs in the month known as *Tepeilhuitl*.

Originally Xochiquetzal seems to have been a local goddess of the Tlascalans. In their country stood a mountain or height known as Xochtecatl, " Goddess of the Flowery Lands," which may at an early period

have been regarded as her especial paradise. She is *par excellence* the Goddess of Flowers, the deity of some mountain whose streams clothed its sides with abundant blossom. She presided, as her joyous character implies, over song, dance, and all sportive amusements. Because of such associations she came to be regarded as the patroness of the softer and more romantic side of love, in which she bears a close resemblance to the Apsarasas of Hindu myth and the nymphs of ancient Greece. We find her, too, as the particular goddess of the girls who lived in the barracks with the unmarried warriors. But she was also the favourite deity of women who desired children (they prayed to her that they might not give birth to girls) and, indeed, she was the great bringer-forth of the race. Moreover, she had an æsthetic significance as the divine weaver, spinner, and artistic designer, and as the inventress of these crafts. And she had a certain significance as a sorceress, possibly because she was thought of as Love, the "enchantress," or perhaps from the circumstance that we find her among the Tzitzimime, the demons of the darksome night. Indeed, I cannot better describe her than as possessing all the characteristics of a fairy queen of early mediæval times, such, for example, as Queen Mab seems to have been.

Her male counterpart was Xochipilli ("Flower Prince"), also known as Macuilxochitl ("Five Flower"), a god of joy and pleasure. He was usually represented as having the upper part of his face painted white, with a dark band over the nose and cheek, and a white patch over the mouth in the shape of an outspread hand, which in some manuscripts is painted in butterfly shape. He wears a cap with projecting bands coloured emerald green, and he carries a shield on which are depicted four feather-like balls or tufts. In some statues and pottery representations of him he is shown as wearing a sort of helmet-mask formed of a bird's head. His attitude is

frequently a squatting one, as though he sat watching a game of ball, his favourite amusement, and indeed statues of him in this pose were erected in the courts dedicated to the *tlachtli*, or ball-game, a kind of *pelota*.

He also had a hymn which told how he came from Tamoanchan, and in which he invoked his grandmother Tlazolteotl. In these strophes he warns the dread god Tezcatlipoca that he has the power to avert his evil omens, and he boasts that he can give life to the " rabbit " or spirit of the *octli* liquor, thus revealing that he is a god of revelry who can banish the dark shadows cast by the more saturnine deities.

Xochipilli was adored at the feast of the *Xochilhuitl*, when a special kind of broth was decocted with a flower floating in the middle of it, and much dancing was engaged in. Quails were sacrificed to him—birds which in many countries are associated with the standing crops because they frequent them and are thus believed to be the spirits of the corn or maize.

Professor Seler has identified Xochipilli with the god Cinteotl. It is not impossible that the twain were originally one; but what is certain is that the Mexicans, who after all are by far the best authorities on their own cults, in later times regarded them as entirely separate in their attributes and functions. For the joyous and sportive side of Xochipilli was developed at the expense of all others. We find Sahagun speaking of him as " the god of those who served for the amusement or pastime of the great "; that is, he was the patron of the Court clowns, jugglers, or jesters. It is chiefly with merriment, dance, sport, the ball-game, and gambling, that he had to do. But he has a more worthy side to him as the patron and inspirer of painters, weavers, artists, and musicians, an aspect he shares with Xochiquetzal. In short, he was a kind of Mexican Dionysus, a god of plenty and overflowing abundance in crops and liquor, a maize-god who became also a deity of mirth

and festive humour and all the joys of show and mummery which accompany these good things.

Xipe Totec, " our Lord the Flayed," was originally a maize-god whose worship at an early period seems to have centred in the vicinity of Oaxaca. Sacrifices were made to him, but the chief difference between these and human offerings to other gods was that the victims were invariably flayed, a circumstance in which some writers have seen an allegorical reflection of the husking of the maize corn, the further shaving of the victim's head being regarded as symbolic of the removal of the beard of the corn when it is husked.

Xipe is most usually depicted as being clad in the flayed skin of the sacrificed human victim, and he wears a face-mask painted yellow to represent dead human flesh. A red streak runs past the eye for the full length of the face, revealing the spot where the business of flaying began. He wears a peculiar peaked cap and a small apron of *zapote* leaves. In some pictures he is attired in the insignia of Tezcatlipoca in his red phase, and in others he appears as the warrior tied to the stone of combat. Several masks of this god have been found, the best known being that now housed in the British Museum; the inside of this mask shows him wearing his complete insignia. For a very full description of this, and a category of its elements, the reader is referred to my book *The Gods of Mexico* (pp. 204–208).

Certain myths speak of Xipe as a great sinner who became an even greater penitent and strove to recall the people from their sins. He conducted them to a desert place where they found the figure of death, which they bound and attempted to drag away. But they fell into an abyss between two mountains which closed together, " and there they have remained buried ever since." In another story he is associated with Quetzalcoatl as a penitent, in which it is said that they led the children and innocent people of Tollan into the bowels of a certain mountain.

The first part of this story is explanatory of the practice on the part of Mexican warriors of making a vow to procure victims for Xipe. Out of this custom arose a sentiment approximate to the penitential, such as moved the knighthood of mediæval Europe on occasion. The rest is a story of the same type as that of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, or that which tells how Barbarossa and his champions or King Arthur and his knights are immured in the depths of a mountain. It may have an allusion to mound-burial, or to the disappearance of an elder race (in this case the Toltecs). The same tale is recounted of Tezcatlipoca, the "flute-player," the "piper," the wandering wind which whistles the march of the dead who follow it, as do the Sluagh, or fairy-dead, in the Western Isles of Scotland.

In a wild but rather beautiful song Xipe is hailed as "the Night Drinker" because of the barbaric belief that by night plants suck up more moisture than during the hot hours of the day. He is entreated to put on his golden garment, the rain, so that the cypresses may glitter like quetzal birds. Satisfaction, ends the song, will come with the appearance of the maize.

The terrible rite of the *Tlacaxipeuliztli* was the heyday of Xipe's worship. First they partly shaved the heads of the victims, then dragged them to the stone of sacrifice by the single lock left to them, cut out their hearts, and cast the bodies down the steps of the *teocalli*, where they were flayed. Certain parts of the body were devoured, but "ceremonially," as some old writers say, and not as a cannibal repast, as though degrees of bestiality in such abominations actually existed. The priests then clothed themselves in the skins, and after a mock combat the wretched captive who was to die on the stone of combat, the *temalacatl*, was secured to it by one ankle. He then fought with picked warriors, but was himself armed only with edgeless weapons. If he fought well, others attacked him until he was slain.

A festival and dancing followed and sometimes lasted for as many as twenty days, at the end of which those who wore the skins of the flayed victims discarded them. The wearing of these horrid trophies was regarded as a great act of penance, and most assuredly it must have been. A particular festival was also held by the goldsmiths, of whose caste Xipe was the patron, because the yellow human skin in which he was clad typified an overlay of gold foil.

Xipe is a god of seed-time and planting and likewise the deity of the warrior's death by combat, because of the connection between the food-supply and military service. The flaying of sacred animals and the wearing of their skins by the priests of their cults is a well-known aspect of early religious practice. It may signify the renewal of life of the deity. Xipe also represents the earth " flayed "; that is, bare and ready for sowing. I cannot agree that the flaying of his victim is allegorical of the husking of the corn, for which notion there is no analogy in religious-agricultural practice. Further, he represents the warrior caste, by whose efforts the altars of Mexico were replenished with human victims and the maize-crop consequently secured.

We encounter an interesting goddess in Itzpapalotl, or " Obsidian Knife Butterfly," who displays butterfly wings edged with stone knives, the claws of a jaguar, and the face of a woman. The interpreter of the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis* has mistakenly alluded to her as a male deity, and the error has been perpetuated simply because, like the witch-women, Itzpapalotl wears a loin-cloth to show her equality with the men warriors, just as some modern women wear " slacks." Oddly enough, the same story is told of her as of Xochiquetzal: " that she pulled some roses, but that suddenly the tree broke and blood streamed from it," for which misdemeanour she was expelled from Paradise. Trees which bleed are familiar in European folk-lore and ballad; indeed savage folk formerly

believed trees to possess individual personalities, like humans. It was a crime to pull flowers or break branches on fairy ground, as the ballads of "Tam Lin" and "Hynd Etin" make quite apparent.

In the Aztec songs so carefully collected by old Sahagun we find the following hymn to Itzpapalotl:

> "O she has become a goddess of the melon cactus,
> Our mother Itzpapalotl, the Obsidian Butterfly;
> Her food is on the Nine Plains,
> She was nurtured on the hearts of deer,
> Our mother, the Earth-goddess."

The inference to be drawn from these strophes would seem to be that whereas Itzpapalotl was formerly the goddess of the Chichimec or Nahua hunting tribes who sacrificed deer to her, she became at a later time the deity of the cultivated fields of a settled community. In fact I do not recall, in a very long experience of mythological literature, any passage which so clearly and beautifully reveals the change-over or translation of a deity from the hunting stage to the agricultural. Indeed the reference is most valuable to students of tradition. It does not tell us precisely how the change took place, but it makes it evident that it actually *did* take place, and is therefore a document of first-rate importance. *The Annals of Quauhtitlan* allude to Itzpapalotl as the foundress of the oldest Chichimec or Nahua kingdom in "the Place of the Wild *Agave*," where, perhaps, the tribes first settled down and partially abandoned the hunting life for that of an agricultural community on finding the *agave* so plentiful. The song I have quoted may refer to such a condition of things. And let it be noted that the hymn in question refers to the goddess's food (the melon cactus) as growing on the Nine Plains in the *present* tense, while the statement that she was nurtured on the hearts of deer is couched in the *past* tense.

This most interesting figure is, indeed, a characteristic example of the manner in which mythological

deities grow ever more complex with the passage of time and the alteration of conditions among their worshippers. In the case of Itzpapaplotl the course of development seems to have been from an Earth-mother (as her hymn describes her) whose dragon-shape has disappeared, all but the teeth and claws, to a deer-goddess of the plains; for certain marks displayed by her lead me to believe that she once took cervine form. In some myths she is identified with the mythical deer Itzcueye, the captive and wife of Mixcoatl, who bears so close a resemblance to those fairy deer-women we read of in Scottish Highland lore. In fact both Mixcoatl and Itzpapalotl take deer-form, and indeed the deer is part of that composite animal the dragon.

But Itzpapalotl is also associated with the cult of obsidian, the cult of the hunter's spear, the magical weapon which brings sustenance to those who live on the spoils of the chase, and to which I referred in an earlier chapter. And she has a similar connection with the lightning, the heavenly spear. She was also included among the Tzitzimime, or star-demons, who dwelt in the heavens. In Mexico the butterfly, which hovers over the cactus, symbolizes the lightning, and at the same time it is regarded as the wandering soul of the dead, as it was among the Celtic peoples.

I now come to the last among the earth deities of Mexico, Ilamatecutli, " The Old Princess." Her pictures show signs of old age in the contracted corners of the mouth, and sometimes she has a skeleton's head. She wears a blue dress covered with spots, symbolic of the starry heavens. Her myth tells us that she was the first wife of Mixcoatl. Her festival was held on the " month " of *Tititl*, or " Stretching of Limbs," and on this occasion a female slave was attired in her insignia and was compelled to dance to the rude music of a band composed of old men. As evening approached, she was taken to the Temple of

Uitzilopochtli and sacrificed, and the body was decapitated. A procession was then formed to the place where sacrifices to Tezcatlipoca were usually carried out, and where there was placed a small cage made of pine-wood and covered with paper, known as " the Granary of Ilamatecutli." Inside this a *maguey*-leaf was placed and the cage was then set on fire. This ceremony was known as the *Xochipayna*, or " flower-running." The cage was carried to the summit of the *teocalli*, where a flower called " the blossom of the god " was placed on the burning mass.

The dance of the victim (" the stretching of limbs ") was, of course, intended to ensure by magical means the suppleness, vigour, and liveliness of the earth-goddess whom the unhappy slave-girl represented and to whom her life and blood gave new strength. The decapitation was perhaps a dramatic allegory of the reaping of the maize.

Ilamatecutli is certainly an earth-goddess and has a marked resemblance to Mictecaciuatl, the consort of the Lord of Hades. But she is the goddess who also represents the earth in an aged and worn-out condition at the end of the year, when the task of bearing the maize harvest is past. Her wearing of a two-faced mask may recall the " kirn-baby " or doll made at harvests in some European countries out of the last sheaf of grain and furnished with a face, sometimes with two faces, so that it should not prove of evil omen to those following the image in procession. This ceremony has close associations with the Celtic Samhain—of which, indeed, it is a part—and was carried out at the incidence of that ancient Celtic festival.

When we come to consider the earth-and-growth deities of Mexico and realize how closely they resemble one another in their attributes and functions, we are compelled to the conclusion that they were mainly forms of the great Earth-mother, which had become celebrated in connection with certain specific localities

and whose cult gradually found their way, by conquest or otherwise, to the metropolitan city of Mexico. As regards the first part of this statement, we observe that Tlazolteotl's worship hailed from the Huaxtec country on the coast, that of Chicomecoatl belonged to Mexico itself (and to the Mexicans she was the most important deity of this class), while Ciuacoatl was worshipped originally in Colhuacan, and Xochimilco and Xochiquetzal in Tlascala and Tlalhuica. Xipe was intrinsically a god of the Yopi folk of the Pacific slope, as the name of his temple *Yopico* (" In Yopi-land ") reveals, while Xilonen belonged to the Huichol tribes and Itzpapalotl to the Northern Chichimecs.

The title of Xipe's temple provides us with a clue by means of which we may explain the second part of the above statement. It seems to imply that the cults of the several great provincial earth-mothers or grain deities were housed in Mexico, the capital, in various parts of the great enclosure which bounded the *teocalli* of Uitzilopochtli. Thus the name of Xipe's shrine, " in Yopi-land," is clearly that of a precinct which must have been regarded as a definite transplantation of the entire Yopi cult or worship of Xipe from the soil of its origin to Mexico City. It was indeed a little patch of Yopi-land in Mexican territory, and doubtless, if we were in possession of all the data, we would find that the other alien or non-Mexican deities were similarly established within the purlieus of the great Temple of Uitzilopochtli, as the result of the conquest of the peoples who worshipped them.

Such a state of things was not unknown elsewhere. The great empire of Babylonia, when it conquered a tribe or country, usually carried large numbers of captives to the capital city and established their religion in proximity to its own, keeping the idols of the alien gods in cages as " prisoners."

Such a process, then, appears to have taken place

in Mexico. At the period of the Spanish Conquest the several earth-and-growth deities had already fallen into place as a recognizable series of maize-gods, some of which represented maternal forms, while others seem to have been regarded as daughter-shapes, symbolizing the maize at various periods of its growth. Chicomecoatl was pre-eminently the maize-mother, while Xilonen and Cinteotl were regarded as the spirits of the plant in the early stages of its growth. Again one or other particular attribute of these deities appears to have seized upon the imagination of priests or people in such a manner that in course of time they came to have a more especial departmental status of their own. In this way Tlazolteotl and Xochiquetzal came to represent the amorous side of life, Xochipilli became the spirit of amusement, and so forth—all these attributes being allegorical in some manner of the myth of the growth of maize and the plenty and prosperity which it brought with it.

CHAPTER VII

THE RAIN-GODS

THE rain-cult was probably the oldest religious organization in Mexico; therefore the worship of the gods associated with it must have been of very considerable antiquity. The deities of rain were thought of by the Nahua as dwelling on the summits of high mountains, from which the rain was believed to come, and in the earliest times they were probably worshipped there. Indeed, the pyramids of Mexico were undoubtedly nothing but artificial "rain-mountains." Each of these heights had a particular god of its own, but all of them bore the same name and possessed the same functions. Each was a Tlaloc ("He who makes things sprout"), and although these rain-deities were not infrequently spoken of in the plural as Tlaloque, they came to be personified in one great god representing the type generally, *the* Tlaloc.

The appearance of this god Tlaloc is so striking and individual that he can easily be picked out from the representations of all the other gods even in the most crowded and complex native painting. His face was developed from the convolutions or windings of two serpents, the symbols of rain, so arranged that they form his nose and upper-lip and make rings round his eyes. His teeth are long and tusk-like and give the impression of having been developed from those of the rain-serpent or "dragon," which he almost certainly was originally.

In most of the native paintings Tlaloc's face is coloured black and yellow, probably to symbolize the thunder-cloud. The garments he wears vary considerably with the several representations of him in the manuscripts. Thus in the Borgia group of codices we find them of a dark green hue, flecked with melted

rubber to symbolize rain-drops, while in the codices belonging to the Mexican area proper they are painted blue and similarly sprinkled with *ulli* gum. His robe, indeed, was known as " the dripping garment " or " the cloud-garment." Sometimes he wears a collar of woven water-reeds, set with a large emerald, whose hue is that of his element, water. His crown is of heron-feathers and his sandals occasionally symbolize the foam of water. But, as I have said, the Nahua painters lavished much imagination on the details of his aqueous wardrobe, so that these are seldom uniform in appearance.

The most enlightening version of the myth of the Tlaloque gods is to be found in *The History of the Mexicans From Their Paintings.* This recounts how the rain-gods dwelt in four chambers surrounding a great court, in which stood four large water-jars. These jars contained the four different kinds of rain which came from the four points of the compass. In one of them good water was stored, and this duly fructified both grain and herbage. The second cask held " bad " water, which produced fungus growths and blackened the maize. The rain of the frosty season filled the third, and the fourth contained rain that was followed by no growth or by such as became sere and withered.

The business of rain-making was thought to be carried out by a number of dwarfs who dwelt in the four chambers of the house and who carried in one hand smaller jars, with which they drew water from the great casks. In the other they bore sticks. These were the Tlaloque. When commanded by the god to water a certain tract of country they poured down liquid from the jars they held, and, if they broke these vessels with their sticks, lightning followed, the pieces of the pottery jars representing the thunderbolts.

I have already spoken of Tlalocan, the mountain-paradise of Tlaloc, to which persons who died of

drowning or " watery" diseases, such as dropsy or gout, were supposed to go. Five important festivals were dedicated to the Tlaloque annually. These were held during the dry season, in February, March, and May, when damp soil was required for planting and, later, rain to nourish the growing maize and herbage. That of *Quaitl eloa*, in February, witnessed a horrid sacrifice of young children. The priests usually selected such infants as had " whorls " or curls in their hair, typical of the swirl of water, and if they wept copiously it was regarded as a good omen for a plentiful rainfall. Some were drowned in the lake, while others were sacrificed on the hill-tops.

At the festival of *Etzalqualiztli* slaves representing Tlaloc, and dressed in his garments, were sacrificed and their hearts thrown into a " gaping hole " in the middle of the lake. The festival of *Tepeilhuitl* was dedicated to the rain-bearing mountains, and concluded with a cannibal feast. On that of *Atemoztli*, " the rain-month," prayers were earnestly offered up for rain; paste images of Tlaloc were made and placed in the houses to induce rain, and later these, too, were " sacrificed " by the priests, who opened their stomachs with a bodkin!

The name " Tlaloc " is derived from the Mexican verb *tlaloa*, to hasten, which in its reflexive sense means " to shoot up," " to sprout," so that the name really conveys the sense of " he who hastens growth." Tlaloc possessed both beneficent and terrible aspects, and was the striker, the slayer by the lightning-bolt, as well as the giver of bounteous food-supplies. He denotes the four quarters from which the rain comes, and in some codices he is represented in the four costumes appropriate to these quarters. In his serpentine form we probably envisage a reminiscence of the dragon-beast known to many mythologies as the " Water-container," which must be compelled to disgorge its pluvial treasure to assist the growth of grain and herbage. In Central America the rain was

thought of as proceeding from such a great serpent, as a drawing in the Mayan *Dresden Codex* (p. 74) reveals.

Chalchihuitlicue, " She of the Jewelled Robe," was, according to some authorities, the sister of Tlaloc and the Tlaloque, while others tell us that she was the wife of the former god. She must at one time have been a deity of major importance, as we find her ruling over one of the sun-phases of the cosmogonic period. Another reason for considering her to have been of high status is the great variety of her representations and insignia in the native painted manuscripts. In the *Codex Borgia* she is shown as wearing a robe with a broad hem, in which the colours of the jade-stone appear; her head is surmounted by a serpent helmet-mask and her nose is pierced by a peculiar and bizarre ornament representing water. In one painting she is represented as standing in a stream, down which a jewel-box, an armed man, and a woman, are seen as though being swirled along by the force of the water. Sahagun remarks upon her watery symbolism, her dress painted with fluent water-lines and ornamented with shells, while her sandals resemble the foam of water.

One of the " interpreters " says that she was " the woman who saved herself from the deluge," and that the picture in which people are represented as being carried away by water symbolizes the fact that all, rich and poor alike, are whirled away and finally " drowned " in the river of time.

She was associated with the Tlaloque in their chief festival, the *Etzalqualiztli*, and was then especially adored by " all who in any way dealt in water or had any connection with it, water-sellers, fishers, and the like," says Sahagun. She was also associated with infant baptism, and the aristocracy took great pains to ensure that this rite took place at a propitious time. A college of priests was set apart for her particular service, and resembled that sacred to Quetzalcoatl.

Sahagun makes her precise character clear enough when he says: "She was supposed to have her existence in the sea, the rivers and lakes, and had power to take the lives of those who ventured upon them, and to raise tempests." She is, indeed, allegorical of water in motion and of its vital significance, and as such was well represented by the serpent, whose motions appear characteristic of it. And she was also the patroness of change in human affairs, a goddess of mutability, and, I believe, she represented time and its many changes, good and evil. But, even more expressly, she represents the purifying and cleansing influence of water as an agency for the removal of original sin. There are signs, too, that she had a medicinal side, since she is occasionally represented bearing a bunch of herbs. Behind all this a lunar influence is also plain, as she is associated with the "four hundred" stars of the Northern Hemisphere and with child-birth, with which the moon is related in all mythologies, and this, I think, further connects her with temporal significance. Complex figures such as hers, abounding in symbolic many-sidedness, make it clear that the Nahuan system of mythology was founded on a much older substratum of fairly advanced religious belief, the comparatively brief time between the advent of the Aztecs into Mexico and the era of the Spanish Conquest indicating that developments of the sort could not have been confined to this period alone.

The myth of the great god Quetzalcoatl, the rain-deity of the Toltecs, is in a sense allegorical of the manner in which the Aztecs absorbed certain major figures in the older pantheon of Mexico into their own. Perhaps none of the deities of old Mexico was at once so complex as regards his myths and history, yet so simple in his general significance. His appearance varies in the native paintings perhaps less than that of any other deity. He wears an odd hat (not unlike that of the traditional Welshwoman) associated with

the Huaxtec folk who dwelt on the east coast. On his back appears a fan-shaped ornament of grouse or crow-feathers, from which rise the brilliant plumes of the *quetzal* bird. On his breast lies a large brooch, or " medal," sliced from a shell, and he carries the *agave*-leaf spike and the bone dagger with which the priests drew blood from their tongues and thighs in penitential exercises. His body-paint is usually black, thus resembling that of the Mexican priests. In many representations of him he is seen wearing a long snouted mask, usually painted a bright red, through which he was supposed to expel the wind in his guise of Eecatl, the wind-god. This mask is frequently fringed with a bristly beard. Very often, too, he carries a peculiarly shaped staff, sometimes in the shape of a serpent.

Because of their importance it is necessary to give some considerable space to the various myths concerning Quetzalcoatl, whose name, I may say at once, means " Feathered Serpent." One of the most enlightening accounts of his story has been bequeathed to us by Sahagun, who tells us that Quetzalcoatl was the father of all the arts of civilization. His reign in Toltec Mexico, the friar says, was one of peace and plenty. He had a large number of swift and agile attendants to wait upon him; his palaces were built from jade and coloured shells, and he enjoyed wealth and provisions in abundance. The years of his reign in Mexico refer, indeed, to those " good old days " we hear so much about in the romances of all lands, and which thousands sigh for in retrospect instead of trying to restore. The maize then grew so large in the head that a man might not carry more than one stalk of it at a time. Pumpkins were as great in circumference as a man is high, and cotton grew, ready dyed, in all the standard colours of the spectrum. His central residence was in the city of Tollan, where he continually did penance and engaged in righteous and pacific tasks.

But this quietly joyous state of things did not commend itself to the younger, more active, and warlike Aztec deities, Tezcatlipoca, Uitzilopochtli, and Tlacuepan, who were jealous of his sovereignty and who regarded his pacific regime with contempt. Tezcatlipoca paid him an " official " visit and, after a good deal of parleying, was admitted. He was told that Quetzalcoatl was indisposed, but, forcing his way into the Toltec god-king's presence, he produced a phial of medicine which, he assured the ailing deity, would " ease his heart " and remove all his anxieties, mental and physical.

But the drug contained in the phial induced in Quetzalcoatl a strange oblivion of his surroundings, and when Tezcatlipoca commanded him to leave the country, he asked whither he should betake himself. The wind-god answered that he must go to the land of Tillan-tlapallan, " where another old man awaits thee. . . . On thy return thou shalt be as a youth, nay as a boy." A great longing to depart now seized upon Quetzalcoatl, and at last he arose and went from Tollan, first either burying or destroying his many treasures. Many tales are told of incidents which occurred in his journey towards the coast. Incidentally he lost all his followers, who perished through cold while traversing the sides of a volcano. The secrets of the Toltec arts and crafts were wrested from him by Tezcatlipoca. At last he reached the seashore, where a raft of serpents was constructed for him, and upon this he seated himself and put out to sea.

The account of Quetzalcoatl given by Torquemada differs only slightly from the foregoing, but it is essential to note some of the differences. Torquemada says that Tezcatlipoca and " other sorcerers " did their utmost to hinder Quetzalcoatl from *leaving* the country. It is interesting to note Torquemada's statement that when Father Sahagun first came to Mexico the natives asked him where Tillan-tlapallan

was situated. They appeared to associate it with the land whence the Spaniards had come, and the reader will recall that Montezuma and his folk believed Hernando Cortez, the Spanish leader, to be Quetzalcoatl himself. Now Torquemada mentions that Quetzalcoatl, before his departure, prophesied that at a future time there would come, by way of the sea, certain white men with beards, and that these would be his brothers and would rule the land. Quetzalcoatl, he adds, was god of the air, was devoted to the older forms of worship and was the inventor of the calendar. "He swept the roads so that the Tlaloque might rain."

In still another version of Quetzalcoatl's myth Torquemada tells us that he was the leader of the Toltecs when they first entered Mexico. Other myths speak of him as a great priest of the rain-cult and as a recluse addicted to penance, and state that he was a teacher and inventor of handicrafts, who discovered the art of writing. Mendieta recounts a story that when Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl were playing at the ball-game Tezcatlipoca transformed himself into a tiger and chased his antagonist from place to place until he drove him to Tlapallan, where he died and his followers burned his body. The interpreter of the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis* says that he was associated by the people with the morning star. *The Annals of Quauhtitlan* aver that Quetzalcoatl, after being banished from Tollan, immolated himself in a great fire on the sea-shore and that his ashes flew upward in the shape of birds, while his heart was transformed into the morning star. It adds that Quetzalcoatl was the discoverer of maize, but that it was stolen from him by Tlaloc.

We also find certain myths relating to Quetzalcoatl in the literature of the Maya and Quiche peoples of Central America, where he was known as Kukulkan, Gucumatz, and Votan. These myths have been somewhat garbled by the Spanish writers who passed them on in their own words, and in some cases they

are confused with Biblical stories. In the Quiche book known as " The Popol Vuh," Quetzalcoatl or Gucumatz, is alluded to as " the serpent covered with green feathers, the heart of the lakes, the heart of the sea, master of the sky," and is connected with the creative gods. Indeed, he is the creator-in-chief and the discoverer of maize.

But the correct course to adopt in the disentangling of such complicated figures is to probe at once to their basic significance. This, in the case of Quetzalcoatl, is connected with his status as a wind-god. Quetzalcoatl is indeed, in his primary condition, nothing but a god or spirit of the trade-wind, which in Mexico blows from the east coast over the plateau from April to October, bringing with it the nourishing rains and thus " sweeping the ways for the rain-gods." At the beginning of October it is modified by the local monsoon which, in certain areas, invades it in violent cyclonic storms. The beneficent " reign " of Quetzalcoatl is opposed by the more violent wind-god Tezcatlipoca, who " chases " him from place to place and at last " hustles " him out of the country, attacking him " like a tiger," as the myth asserts. In Central America Tezcatlipoca is the " Hurakan," or hurricane, who " destroys " the gentler trade wind.

If this explanation be accepted it will be seen how naturally later modifications of the myth arise out of it, or adapt themselves to it.

Has the myth of Quetzalcoatl as a civilizing agent, a " culture-hero " in the Mexican Valley, an historical origin? His dress and insignia reveal that Quetzalcoatl may probably have been of Huaxtec origin. This may mean nothing more than that he represented a wind which blew from the direction of the Huaxtec country. But he was not the only Huaxtec god adopted by the Nahua, and the Huaxtecs were a people of Mayan origin, which would account for the link between the Mexican and Mayan forms of Quetzalcoatl.

Extraordinary confusion has been caused in modern works dealing with the history of Mexico and Central America because their authors have insisted upon regarding Quetzalcoatl, or his Mayan forms, as actual kings or rulers alone. The arguments respecting this view appear to be ceaseless, and much valuable time is wasted upon them. If these writers were better versed in the laws of tradition, they would discover that the many passages concerning Quetzalcoatl in Mexican records refer not only to the god, but to living representatives of a line of hereditary priestly rulers called by his name, also to more than one ancient hero who bore that name, and that these have been confused by generations of writers on the legend of Quetzalcoatl.

Fundamentally, Quetzalcoatl is a mythical character. All his associations, his deeds, and the circumstances of his departure, are mythical. This is proved to the hilt by the statement that his opponents and oppressors, Tezcatlipoca and the rest, are themselves the gods of a race hostile to his worship. In the course of time he came to be regarded popularly as a human figure, precisely as did " King Arthur," who has now been revealed as a form of the British god Bran (Arddhu " the black "—i.e. " the Raven ").

But Quetzalcoatl was also regarded as the high priest of his own cult; that is, he was in a very special sense the deified rain-making priest, the great penitent. He is the magic-making god who charms or drives by the breeze the rain-clouds from the east so that they will fall upon the plateau of Mexico, and, as that is precisely the rôle of the rain-making priest on earth, there is no difficulty in arriving at such an identification. His myth tells how his rain-making powers fail him. He falls into sickness and is beguiled into leaving the country—an allegory of the annual cessation of the rainy season. Tezcatlipoca tells him that he must retire to Tlapallan, where " another old man " awaits him, and that he will return from thence " as

a youth, even as a boy." This is certainly a reference to the guardian genius of the Fountain of Youth, known to all mythologies, the reservoir of rain and all refreshment, which Quetzalcoatl must visit if he would be restored to that new power and juvenile strength which will alone ensure him the might to function as a rain-god during the approaching rainy season. In the story of his retirement from Tollan his myth may have become confused with the history of the fall of the Toltec State, of which he is typical, the Nahua sorcerer Tezcatlipoca detaining him in order to wrest from him the secret of Toltec arts and handicraft.

Summing up the general development and several conceptions of this most important deity, we find that all of them have their origin in a simple nature-myth, in which Quetzalcoatl, the rain-bearing trade-wind, was thought of as stimulating agriculture in Mexico, and at the end of the rainy season was regarded as being driven out of the country by Tezcatlipoca, the "monsoon" or hurricane. This myth appears to have been confused at a later time with the circumstances of the growth of culture and civilization in Mexico, which were the direct results of the wealth and ease brought about by agricultural prosperity.

The notion of vitality appears further to have been connected with a myth relating to the Fountain of Youth, the reservoir of the rains in the East, to which the god must return for rejuvenation and new rain-making powers. As Quetzalcoatl's task was precisely that in which the rain-making priests were engaged, he came to be looked upon, and was represented symbolically, as the chief of these. A line of priestly rulers bearing his name arose; indeed the best evidence of this is the existence of such a dynasty in the Zapotec country, while in Mexico itself the high priest of the god bore his name. In his Central American form of Votan, too, he was the founder of a priestly dynasty, as Nuñez de la Vega has placed on record. Tradition also recounted how Quetzalcoatl

was the inventor of the *Tonalamatl* or calendar, from which circumstance he came to be regarded as the founder of the art of writing in hieroglyphs and thus as the possessor of profound wisdom, the sage and magus-in-chief. As a god of wind, and therefore associated with the breath of life, he was considered a creative deity. As a god of the space of the sky he is furthermore one of the four supporters of the heavenly canopy.

When Quetzalcoatl died, as we have seen, he transformed himself into the morning star, the luminary which constantly returns, which was not only the initial point of the calendar, but, like the god, departs only to return at its appointed time.

His character as the Great Penitent, the extractor of rain-making blood from certain members of the body, and his nature as a recluse, no less than certain representations of him sitting cross-legged in an attitude of silent meditation, have led some enthusiastic votaries of the theory of the introduction of Buddhism into America to identify Quetzalcoatl with Guatama Buddha himself. The development of pious reflection in Mexico appears to have taken a course there similar to that which originated in Asia.

It is much more to the point that the entire circumstances of Quetzalcoatl's myth reveal a striking analogy to those developments in Egypt which resulted in the formation of the idea of Osiris as the Divine King. Further examination of the resemblance could, I think, scarcely fail to establish it as a phenomenon identical in many of its elements with that Egyptian doctrine.

The name of Quetzalcoatl is made up of the verbal elements *quetzal*, referring to the quetzal bird, and *coatl*, " snake." These elements are also capable of being translated as " precious " and " twin." But I believe the name has reference to the iridescent hues of the rain falling upon tropical vegetation, to which the brilliant feathers of the *quetzal* or trogon have a decided resemblance.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GODS OF FIRE

IT seems possible that the Nahuan Gods of Fire were placed, either by priests or people, in a separate class and regarded as forming a group, as were, for instance, the *Octli* Gods or those of rain. In any case, for purposes of study and comparison, it is necessary to consider them as a class by themselves, although some other gods, particularly Uitzilopochtli, had some of the attributes of a fire-god, as the circumstances of one of his festivals reveal.

The most important among these deities of flame is certainly Xiuhtecutli, " Lord of the Year," who had quite an extraordinary number of minor names and who probably represented fire in its primeval nature. In the *Codex Vaticanus B* we see him standing before a temple, holding a bundle of firewood with a rubber ball in his hand—combustibles which represented the elements of the holy fire. He is painted red, with the lower part of the face blackened by melted rubber, probably to symbolize ashes. His hair is usually the colour of flame. Occasionally he is accompanied by the scorpion. He usually holds the *xiuhatlatl* or throwing-stick, or the *xiuhcatl* or fire-snake, the war implement of Uitzilopochtli. The headband he wears is set with precious stones to represent the brilliance of flame. In some pictures he is seen with his fire-snake disguise huddled upon his back. It was a peculiarity of the Mexican deities that, like the wizards or medicine-men of the nation, they frequently affected disguises. These were dresses or cloaks, fashioned in the likeness of jaguars, bats, coyotes, or some other animal or bird, and when a god or man assumed these he was thought of as taking on the nature of the animal itself.

One finds an analogy with this kind of thing among certain Indian tribes of North America, who, on the occasion of their great festivals, don buffalo or bear-robes and make up their faces to represent these creatures. There are also castes of "leopard" magicians in Central Africa whose initiates affect similar disguises, and I believe this kind of masquerading reveals to a great extent the secret of the rapid transformations which we read of in folk-tales as being indulged in by magicians and enchanters.

The protean character of fire was probably accountable for the disguise of Xiuhtecutli, and this also explains the large number of subsidiary names he possessed. One of these, "The Old God," particularly reveals his pristine nature. At their meals the folk offered up the first morsel of food and the first sip of drink to him by casting these into the domestic fire. The people were, in fact, assured by the priests that he was their father and mother and older than any of the gods. Two festivals in his honour were held each year. In the first of these, the *Xocohuetzi*, a great tree was felled and dragged into the city, where it was set up with acclamations. On the summit of this an image of the god was placed, from which long strips of paper floated. Captives, who were painted in the flame-colours of the god, were forced to dance before this tree along with their captors. Next morning their heads were shaved (the Mexican equivalent for scalping) and these victims were then partially burned in a huge fire on the summit of one of the *teocallis*, or temples. When half-roasted the hapless wretches were dragged out of the furnace and sacrificed by having their hearts torn out. These fiendish proceedings, which are paralleled in horrid cruelty only by certain acts which have recently been perpetrated in Europe itself and in our own time, were followed by a general rush for the tree, which the crowd tried to scale to reach the image at the top. He who secured it was

clothed and honoured as a god. The details of this latter rite recall those connected with the English maypole.

Xiuhtecutli was the pre-solar fire, as it existed before the creation of the sun or moon, and he was thought of as ruling over fire wherever it was found, whether it came from the heavens above or the earth beneath, where the volcanic forces have their origin. His chief home, however, was "the blue stone pyramid," which, of course, is nothing else than the sky. As fire, particularly in the domestic sense, needs constant renewal, so he became symbolic of re-creation or rebirth and was regarded as the renewer of the year. He was also typical of the destruction that follows on war and he appears to have been associated with the ideals of justice and law-giving. As Lord of the Middle, or the Centre of creation, he was ruler of the domestic hearth, which in Mexican houses was situated in the middle of the dwelling.

A female deity of fire was Chantico, who has the same face-painting as Xiuhtecutli, although in at least one manuscript it is criss-crossed by lines which dispose it into a number of squares, each of which contains a ring in the centre, the hieroglyphic determinative of the feminine. Her teeth are long and sharp, like those of a carnivorous animal. For some reason, not at all clear, she is sometimes alluded to as a male deity, and in this guise is associated with the dog. Her idol was kept in a dark place in one of the temples and was not visible to the public gaze. She must be regarded as symbolizing the consuming and savage nature of fire, as a description of her idol by Duran, who speaks of its open jaws and gleaming fangs, would seem to indicate. It was perhaps because of this that she was associated with the dog, the biting animal, whose sharp teeth appeared to the Mexicans symbolic of the searing nature of flame. But she is also the volcanic fire which is hidden in the centre of the earth, and it was probably

for this reason that her image was enclosed in a secret place. Two of her names are associated with the butterfly, and these have reference to the flitting shapes sometimes assumed by fire. She is also the patroness of *chilli* pepper, which was naturally associated with her element. On her feast-day the wizards were given especial power to transform themselves into animals, and this has reference to the protean character of fire, as in the case of Xiuhtecutli. Her name " In the House," alludes, of course, to her character as a goddess of the domestic hearth.

She had a variant or surrogate, known as Quaxolotl, a name which may be translated " Split at the Top." This seems to signify the kind of flame which bifurcates or splits into two tongues. Because of this she was connected with all things double and is " the goddess who has borne twins."

CHAPTER IX

GODS OF THE LUMINARIES AND PLANETS

IN the Mythology of Mexico the gods of the sun, moon, and planets hold quite a conspicuous position which their relationship with the *Tonalamatl*, or Calendar, by no means lessens. By far the most important among these was Tonatiuh, the God of the Sun, who was also known as Piltzintecutli, "the Young Prince," and as Totec, "Our Chief," while he possessed still other subsidiary titles.

The salient characteristics of this deity, as represented in his paintings, are the yellow colour with which his face and body are plentifully smeared, the two-sided stripe which brackets the region of the eye, running along the forehead and merging into the nose-plug, and the yellow or flame-coloured hair, held by a jewelled head-band having a bird's head in front. From this head-dress depends a long, hairy band which appears to be characteristic of him in the manuscripts of the *Codex Borgia* group of paintings. On his back he usually wears the solar disk. Examination of such figures compels us to recognize that the symbolism of the Mexican deities was more elaborate by far than that of the gods of Greece, Rome, and even of Egypt. The probable reason for all this symbolic detail was almost certainly the priestly desire that the people at large might recognize a god from his insignia, so that a deity's garb, ornaments, and face-paint were actually of the nature of hieroglyphs easily "read" and conspicuous. Where so many gods existed, the priests of the several cults would be particularly anxious that their own especial god should be easily recognized.

The myths respecting the creation of the sun, and that which refers to the belief that it was a paradise

for warriors who fell in battle, have already been detailed. Tonatiuh had several festivals sacred to him. That known as *Nauollin*, " the Four Motions " (alluding to the trembling or quivering appearance of the sun's rays), was chiefly important because of the sacrifice of a captive, whose spirit was expected to bear aloft a fresh supply of face-paint to the solar god, a staff to help him on his journey, and a shield for his defence. The greater festival of *Toxiuhilpilia* was celebrated only once in fifty-two years. The name signified " the Binding of the Years," at which time the " Old Sun " perished and when, it was hoped, a new sun would make its appearance. Should a new luminary fail to take the place of the old, it was believed that the universe would be plunged into gloom. The term " binding " may refer either to the linking up of one sun-period with another, or to the ritual capture and fixation of a new epoch.

On this great occasion the people made every preparation for the end of the world, destroying their household gear and holding themselves in readiness for a general termination of terrestrial events. The priests, with a shrewder notion of the issue, prepared an altar on the summit of a hill a few miles distant from the city of Mexico, where they awaited the dawn. The doomed victim was made ready and two brands of firewood were laid upon his breast to receive ritually the fire from the new sun. Great multitudes of terrified citizens silently awaited the turn of events on the hill-tops and terraces. When at last the dawn broke and the sacred fire glittered on the prone body of the sacrificed wretch, the great crowd burst into joyful exclamations, a huge beacon was kindled on the mountain-top, and the slain captive's body was consumed therein. The people rushed to the blaze, lighting torches from it, with which they replenished the fires upon their domestic hearths. During the next thirteen days they repainted and repaired the temples and their own abodes, and

furnished themselves with new attire and household utensils. At the end of that time, on a date which corresponded with the 26th of February in the Roman Calendar, the new era of fifty-two years was held to have commenced and was celebrated with elaborate entertainments, dances, and banquets—and, of course, a regular orgy of human sacrifice.

The myths which recount the origin of the sun appear to regard him chiefly as a luminary, though it is also clear that he possessed an indwelling spirit, represented by one or other of the gods in an earlier age. The name Tonatiuh means " sun," and nothing else, but at a later stage there can be no question that in his form of Piltzintecutli he took on a more definite personality and quality of godhead. In fact, he became *the teotl*, the god supreme, in a particular sense, probably because the priesthood regarded the sun as situated at the core and centre of the whole elaborate religious and ritual edifice symbolized by the *Tonalamatl*, or Calendar. In simple phraseology, the sun was a region, or a " house," and a great god dwelt therein.

But that sun-worship of a kind existed among the early Nahua in the hunting stage we have already seen. The sun, it was thought in these primitive times, lived on the blood of animals, and, when these were scarce, that of human beings was substituted for it. If such offerings were not forthcoming, then the luminary would grow old and feeble and would eventually perish. It seems probable, as I have already suggested, that when the later Nahua tribes entered Mexico and found that the beasts of the chase were less abundant there than on their native northern plains, they adopted the wholesale substitution of war-captives as sacrifices. The sacrifices to the sun were not, as was the case of most of the other gods, occasional. Every morning at dawn his appearance was hailed by the immolation of scores of quails and small birds whose hearts were offered

up to him. It was regarded as perilous to cease from sacrifice to him for any length of time. His offerings were continuous.

Because he lived upon human blood, the Sun-god naturally became the great patron of the warriors who procured captives, and in this connection he is closely identified with Uitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipoca, both of whom possessed solar attributes. As a god of fire he is further identified with Xiuhtecutli, who symbolized that element. But I must add here that there is a certain lack of data concerning the definite personalization of Tonatiuh or Piltzintecutli. He appears to have few or no relationships in myth, and no such body of tales concerning him exists as we so commonly find to be the case in connection with the solar deities of other mythic systems—Apollo, Bel, Lugh, or Ra-Osiris. For this reason alone I am inclined to believe that he was at first regarded by the Mexicans as the sun pure and simple, and that at a later stage the entity which ensouled him, though unquestionably of high importance in a ritual and cosmogonic sense, was in effect more of the nature of a sun-spirit, a "man of the sun," than a god proper with a fully-developed mythic record behind him. As regards his early and later status as an element of growth there is, of course, no question. In such a quality he was always recognized, and in his capacity of a god of fire he was similarly considered as a deity of growth.

Metztli, the moon-god, is usually represented in the codices as an old man. The body and face are painted blue and he wears a long beard. The principal myths associated with the moon and its origin I have already dealt with in connection with the stories of creation. At least two of the interpreters state that the Mexicans believed the moon to be the cause of generation—a belief which, indeed, runs through the whole of European and Asiatic folklore. For example, Diana, the moon-goddess, was

known as a patroness of human birth, and this quality she bequeathed to her folk-lore descendants, the fairies, who are still identified with lunar influences in many lands.

The interpreter of the *Codex-Telleriano-Remensis* says that the Moon-god Metztli was also known as Tecciztecatl. Now Tecciztecatl is undoubtedly the same as that mythical personage whom children and illiterate folk call "the Man in the Moon"; that is, the spirit who dwells in or animates the luminary of night. He is the wizard who lurks within the moon-cave, for so the moon seems to have appeared to the Mexicans, although it was also symbolized as a snail-shell, the curved shape of the satellite, in its earlier phase, prompting this conception of it. Such an idea probably inspired that train of thought which resulted in the moon being looked upon as the symbol of conception and birth—its growth and gradual rotundity, as well as its symbolic connection with the snail, assisting the notion. The interpreter of the *Codex Vaticanus A* states that: "They placed on the head of the moon-god a sea-snail, to denote that in the same way as this marine animal creeps from its shell, so man issues from his mother."

An important sky-deity was Mixcoatl ("Cloud-Serpent"), who was known also as Iztac Mixcoatl ("White Cloud-Serpent") and as Camaxtli. In the first of these phases he was represented as wearing the strange black half-mask which distinguishes all the stellar deities in Mexico. His hair curls up above the brow and is decorated with downy white feathers, to represent the clouds, while his body-colour is half-blue, half-red, arranged in a series of vertical stripes, such as some of the star-gods display. He was originally a god of the hunting tribes, the Chichimecs, and, like them, he is sometimes depicted as nude and as wearing an ear-plug, or ornament, made from a deer's foot. He carries an *atlatl*, an instrument from which spears or javelins were propelled, and some-

times he bears an arrow which has a suspicious resemblance in its make-up to those sacred arrows still preserved with such veneration by some North American Indian tribes as symbols connected with the points of the compass.

However " barbarous " he may have been originally, Mixcoatl seems to have retained his position among the Aztec gods even when his worshippers achieved a higher standard of existence than that of mere hunters, and we even find paintings representing him on the walls of the Temples at Mitla, where we see him represented with a beard and in close association with the deer. In his phase as Iztac Mixcoatl he is actually represented with the head of a deer, revealing that at one time he must have been regarded as the Great Deer; that is, as a beast-god who held suzerainty over the cervine herds and who must be placated for the loss of his " children " when these were slain. As Camaxtli his hunting status is emphasized by the addition to his pictures of the hunter's net-bag for carrying game, and he is seen bearing the bow and arrows as symbolic of the chase.

It was as Iztac Mixcoatl, according to Motolinia, that he was regarded as the progenitor of the Nahua tribes who had dwelt in the " Land of the Seven Caves," out of which these clans had issued. By his second wife, Chimamatl, he was said to have been the father of Quetzalcoatl; that is, Aztec priestly mythographers had " poetically " surmised that the deity of the heavenly expanse was naturally the progenitor of the wind-rain god. But that this was an Aztec attempt to identify their cult with that of the Toltecs is all too evident!

Iztac Mixcoatl was indeed the Chichimec Adam, the father of the hunting tribes. At the festival of Quecholli, the fourteenth " month," small darts and arrows were placed on the graves of the dead in memory of him, and a great public hunting of all the

wild animals in the neighbourhood was engaged in. Such drives were, indeed, not unknown to mediæval Europe and may have originated in a similar idea. Women were slain in the temples, being first trussed like deer before they were carried to the slaughter, and a man and woman representing Mixcoatl and his consort were ceremonially sacrificed.

Numbers of Mixcoatl's worshippers must have settled in the cities and towns of Mexico when they abandoned a hunting existence. He seems to have been confused in the public imagination with Uitzilopochtli, whom he resembles, and in some accounts is described as his brother. Indeed, it is impossible to believe that in the popular mind all the minutiæ and relationships of a teeming mythology could have been remembered and classified precisely. In all likelihood only the priests were knowledgeable concerning these finer differences, while the people, from whom many of the old Spanish monks received their impressions of the Mexican faith, possessed only a confused and garbled notion of the whole. Outside of Mexico City, too, local gods eclipsed the glory of the national deities, who were certainly identified with them provincially.

Allegorically, Mixcoatl is the rain- and lightning-bearing cloud which in the mind of the savage takes the form of a great monster, a dragon or serpent, vomiting fire and discharging water. The name "Cloud-Serpent" substantiates this conception of him. But in the eyes of a hunting people he came to represent also the Great Hunter who wields the thunderbolt and the lightning-arrow, and is therefore the divine prototype of the hunter himself. Because he possessed the attributes of a sky-god he inevitably became identified with the stellar deities, and he is indeed chief of the Centzon Mimixcoa, the host of stars to the north of the equator, in contradistinction to the Centzon Uitznaua, the "Four Hundred Southerners," who were scattered and put to rout

by Uitzilopochtli. Because of his connection with the lightning, Mixcoatl was also the god of the fire-twirler, the apparatus with which fire was made ceremonially.

Tlauizcalpan-tecutli (" Lord of the House of the Dawn ") was a deity connected with the planet Venus. His representations are manifold and replete with symbolism, but generally he wears the stellar mask, and his body is also striped in various hues like those of the star-gods. Some authorities have identified him with Mixcoatl, whom he rather resembles in his insignia, but the probability is that he is a variant of Quetzalcoatl. In some of the codices he is represented as shooting his rays at various classes of people or animals, and thus he seems to have been thought of as exercising an evil influence on certain types of folk at those times of the year associated with the revolutions of the planet Venus. As Seler says: " It is possible that we have on these pages simply an astrological speculation arising out of superstitious fear of the influence of the light of this powerful planet." When Venus appeared in the heavens, chimneys were stopped up lest its light should penetrate into the houses. I believe this god to have been Quetzalcoatl in his phase of the planet Venus, which, we will remember, he took upon himself after he had either arrived at the sea-shore of Mexico on his journey from Tollan, or when he had reached the sacred eastern land across the sea to which he had gone to recruit himself at the Fountain of Youth. That the rays of the planet Venus were thought of as having an evil significance does not signify any change in Quetzalcoatl's character as a beneficent god, but rather implies that the planet in question was regarded in Mexico, as elsewhere, as ominous and harmful, and that this sinister influence was therefore transferred to him in a season notoriously mischievous in its results to certain gods and people born upon certain dates in the calendar.

The Tzitzimime were certain stars in the form of harmful demons. The name implies " Upholders of the Cane Carpet " and obviously has reference to a belief that they upheld the heavens as a species of canopy. In the representations of them the face often resembles that of a death's head, and the hair is puffed up " in fiendish wise." In the *Codex Borbonicus* certain insects pictured are representations of the Tzitzimime gods in their demonic forms. The interpreter of the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis* tells us that they were the devils who fell from grace and who became the stars, a myth resembling the old Christian legend which told how Lucifer and his angels fell from heaven and became " devils." The self-same story is still told about the fairies in Ireland. Tezozomoc says that the building of the great temple at Mexico was not complete until the images of the Tzitzimime were added to it and arranged round that of Uitzilopochtli. He describes them as " angels of the air, holding up the sky," and " the gods of the air, who draw down the rains, waters, clouds, thunders, and lightnings."

Mr. J. Eric Thompson says of them: " The Tzitzimime were stars, constellations or planets in the heavens, who were considered under certain circumstances to be baneful. During eclipses of the sun they were believed to descend headlong to earth to devour human beings. In other words, they became visible through the darkening of the heavens. Their symbol was the spider who descends from his web downward, and some of them were said to descend headlong from the sky by means of ropes of spider's web. Included in their number were Tlauizcalpantecutli, Itzpapalotl-Otontecutli, Quetzalcoatl, and Mictlan-Tecutli, who were the upholders of the night heavens at their four quarters. It is possible that there were only four Tzitzimime, which were those mentioned above, the rest being merely variants." The Tzitzimime are equated by Seler with the Sky

Supporters to which I have already alluded, and I believe that this satisfactorily identifies them, and that the " Sky Supporters " and Tzitzimime were practically one and the same. The gods mentioned by Mr. Thompson as Tzitzimime can all be identified in one way or another with certain planets.

CHAPTER X

THE DRINK-GODS

ANOTHER group of gods now engages our attention. They are those whose cult was associated with the liquor known presently as *pulque*, and more anciently as *octli*, a fermented drink brewed from the juice of the *Agave Americana*, the *maguey* or "Century Plant," so called from the popular belief that it flowers only once in a hundred years in hothouses in Europe, although in actual fact it does so in from forty to sixty years.

In Aztec times, when a man was intoxicated with this native drink he was thought to be under the influence of a god or spirit. The form under which the drink-gods were worshipped was the rabbit, that animal being considered as utterly devoid of sense and thus as symbolizing drunkenness. The deity who might be called the normal and outstanding figure among the drink-gods was known as Ome-tochtli or "Two-Rabbit." The scale of drunkenness a man achieved was indicated by the number of rabbits he worshipped prior to a drinking-bout, four hundred representing the most extreme degree of intoxication. Indeed the term "four hundred" in Aztec parlance signified "a very great number," or "innumerable." Every trade or profession had its own "Ome-tochtli," but for the aristocracy there was only one drink-god, Cohuatzincatl, meaning "He-who-has-Ancestors" and implying a superior relationship. If a drunkard was anxious to escape danger from accidental strangulation during intoxication he sacrificed to the *octli*-god Tequechmecauiani, or if he feared to be accidentally drowned while in liquor—which might well have been his fate in a lacustrine district like that of Mexico—he made it his business to placate another

octli-spirit known as Teatlahuiani. If he merely dreaded a " hangover," he sacrificed to Quatlapanqui, " the Headsplitter," or else to Papaztac, " the Nerveless."

Several of these drink-gods seem to have been connected with various localities; for example, Tepoxtecatl was the *octli* god of Tepoztlan, while another, Tezcatzoncatl, was worshipped at Tlacopan. The Aztecs believed that anyone born on the calendar-day denoted by the sign of Ome-tochtli, or " Two-Rabbit," was almost certain to turn out a drunkard. All the *octli*-gods were closely associated with the soil and with the earth-goddess. On the whole it is safe to infer that they were originally spirits of local husbandry, who imparted vigour to the soil as *octli* imparted strength and courage to the warrior.

The *octli*-gods had a rather rich and curious insignia. The middle part of the face was usually painted red in its entire length, black or dark green at the temples, and sometimes black with longish yellow spots. They usually wore a crescent-shaped nose-plate, a four-cornered ear-pendant, such as the rain-gods occasionally display, a crown of heron's feathers mingled with those of the roseate spoonbill or *arara*, and they carried a stone or sometimes a copper axe as a weapon.

Writing of the *octli*-gods, Sahagun says that Tezcatzoncatl was the father or brother of the rest, of whom he gives a list numbering a dozen. An old myth from the Huaxtec country states that Tezcatlipoca " killed the God of Wine with his consent and concurrence, giving out that in this way he gave him eternal life, and that, if he did not die, all persons drinking wine must die; but that the death of this Ome-tochtli was only like the sleep of one drunk, that he afterwards recovered and again became fresh and well."

The great festival of the *octli*-gods was held on the date of Ome-Tochtli, and this calendrical name was itself deified as a god, who was otherwise known as

Tepoxtecatl. This is by no means a singular case in Mexican mythology, a considerable number of these calendar-dates having been developed into gods, much as certain days in the Roman calendar which had no saints attached to them were " canonized " and had artificial names bestowed on them, these being usually taken from the day itself and Latinized.

On the day of the principal feast of the *octli*-gods the image of Tepoxtecatl, or Ome-Tochtli, was ornamented in the temple and food-offerings were made to it. A great jar of *octli* was placed in the temple court and all who wished might drink from it. On this occasion, too, the first-fruits of the sap of the maguey-plant were borne to the temple by the guild of the *agave* growers.

The rabbit, which typified the numerous *octli*-gods, was connected with that other rabbit of popular tradition which legend in many countries assures us dwells in the moon. These drink deities were also associated with the cult of fire, probably because of the burning or " stinging " quality characteristic of the liquor they symbolize. *Octli* in its natural state is a drink suave to the palate, but the *mescal* spirit distilled from it is a sufficiently fiery liquor. It was either poured on the domestic hearth as an oblation or splashed upon it with a brush, or *aspergillum*, the invocation accompanying the action being couched in the words: " Shining rose, light-giving rose, receive and rejoice my heart."

A brief examination of the principal *octli* gods and their characteristics should prove enlightening. Tezcatzoncatl, whose name may be translated " Mirror Covered with Straw," is a weird and even amusing figure. A serpent *motif* almost in the shape of a pair of spectacles encircles his eyes; he wears the half-moon nose-plug, and the underside of his statue is incised to represent the ripples of water and is covered with representations of marine animals and shells. It was this god who was sacrificed by Tezcatlipoca and

who later revived. He typifies the drunkard's sleep and was indeed the god of intoxication *par excellence*, father of all the drink gods. Tepoxtecatl, " He of the Axe," was more particularly the drink-god of the people of the quarter of Amantlan in the city of Mexico. The interpreter of the *Codex Magliabecchiano* says of him: " This is the representation of a great iniquity . . . namely that when an Indian died of intoxication the others of the village made a great feast to him, holding in their hands copper axes, which were used to fell wood." The axe is the especial implement of the Tlaloque, or rain-gods, and its possession would seem to confer on Tepoxtecatl a certain pluvial significance, which the *octli* gods undoubtedly appropriated as " strengtheners " of the soil. The sap of the *agave* may, indeed, have been regarded as rain in another form.

Patecatl, " He from the Land of Medicine," is associated in some of the painted manuscripts with Tlazolteotl, the goddess of lust, the Mexican Venus, thus revealing the connection between drink and immorality. He holds the stone hatchet which most of the *octli* gods carry and wears a head-dress resembling the royal crown of Mexico, to which is added the head of an ape on the frontal side. Indeed, the ape seems to have been identified with drunkenness in ancient Mexico. His garments are frequently decorated with lunar symbols. Perhaps the best representation of him is to be found in the *Codex Borbonicus* (sheet 11) in which he is pictured as surrounded by all the *octli* emblems. The interpreter of the *Codex Vaticanus A* says of him that he was the husband of Mayauel, the woman with four hundred breasts, who had been transformed into the *maguey* plant. Patecatl, continues the interpreter, had been a man, and as the inventor of liquor was afterwards worshipped as a god.

The interpreter of the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis* tells us that Patecatl discovered the species of root by

which the *octli* was fermented and without which it would not produce intoxication. The Mexicans believed that men born under his sign would be valiant in war. Tradition says that he was the first drunkard. Motolinia explains that the particular roots employed in the process of fermenting *octli* were known as *ocpatli*, or "*octli*-medicine," and, although it was not known what exactly they were, other writers confirm this statement. Patecatl probably personifies the particular herb by which this process was accomplished. Indeed this is almost certainly the case, as the Mexican word *patli* means "medicine." The herbal conception of many Greek and other deities, their actual development from plants into gods, is now well authenticated through the labours of the late Dr. Rendal Harris, as set forth in that revealing work of his, *The Ascent of Olympus*.

The goddess Mayauel, "She of the Maguey-Plant," typifies the *agave*-plant itself. Many representations of her show her as issuing from the leaves of the *agave*. Her mouth is surrounded by a black patch, which is indeed her outstanding characteristic; her garments are painted to resemble water and are hung with shells. In one account she is actually said to be the mother of Cinteotl, an important maize-god. The interpreter of the *Codex-Vaticanus A* remarks that all the gods had their origin from the *maguey*-plant, thus making clear its association with the deities of the soil, while in another account Mayauel is identified with Cipactli, the earth-dragon. She is, also, partly identified with Tlazolteotl in her form of maize-goddess, and occasionally wears that deity's insignia. In some pictures she is seen holding the wort, or "medicine," which gave a narcotic quality to the *octli* (drink, and which) was thought of as "strangling" or choking the drunkard. The plant in question has the appearance of a rope, and in more than one picture this seems to be its symbol or hieroglyph.

Macuiltochtli appears to have been the God of Conviviality. The name implies "Five-Rabbit," and denotes a decorous stage of polite excitement on the road to intoxication. His mouth is painted as though covered with a hand, which denotes that he is akin in some way to Macuilxochitl, the God of Flowers, and to Xolotl, who in one of his phases is the court-jester or clown, so that he partakes with them of the quality of a deity of pleasure and amusement.

In the figure of Totochtin, whom Sahagun refers to as "the God of Wine," we may see a personification of the Centzon Totochtin, or "Four Hundred," or "Innumerable," octli-gods, a deity in which, for the Aztec mind, the entire assemblage of drink-gods seems to have become merged. Round the lower part of his body he wears a net-cloth decorated with scorpions, which probably symbolize the fierce "sting" of liquor, and he carries the axe common to all the deities of liquor. Another god who, like Mayauel, appears to provide a link between the *octli* and maize deities is Tomiauhtecutli, "Lord of the Maize-Flower," who wears symbols associated with both water and cotton. He was connected with the flowering of the maize-plant, which occasion took place during the month tepeilhuitl, when *octli* was drunk and his festival was celebrated.

It appears probable that as at least three of the more important figures among the *octli-gods*, Ome-tochtli, Patecatl, and Mayauel, hailed from the Huaxtec country, which was inhabited by a people of Mayan stock, and that their worship originated in that area and was later imported into Mexico proper. It was further associated with the idea that the *maguey* conferred vigour upon plant-growth and also gave courage and strength to the warrior. *Octli* was drunk by the braves before going into battle, and it was the last draught presented to the captive victim about to die on the stone of sacrifice before he engaged in a sham combat with his captor. To the imagination

of the Aztecs it seems to have appeared as a species of almost magical elixir, only to be indulged in at seasons of religious festival or special national festivity, or on the eve of battle. At other times a man was not supposed to be justified in partaking of it unless he was well up in years, when he might solace himself with the juice of the *maguey* in order to counteract that melancholy which is supposed to accompany senility. A drunkard, if caught *in flagrante delicto*, was liable to be sacrificed, and the danger of excess was frankly recognized in old Mexico, where, perhaps, this dread of it was in a measure accompanied by a sentiment that it was in some degree blasphemous to the gods of the soil to exceed, a temptation to their wrath, and, it may be, an act which lessened their magical growth-making propensities.

CHAPTER XI

GODS OF DEATH AND THE UNDER-WORLD

I HAVE already alluded to Mictlampa, the region of the dead, that gloomy kingdom to which the departed Aztec journeyed through dangers which recall those of the path to the Egyptian refuge of souls, and I have now to describe its grisly rulers who seem to have haunted the imagination of the Nahua people even more distressingly than did "Satan" those of our mediæval forefathers.

The chief of these was Mictlantecutli, whose name reveals that he was most closely associated with the place of the dead, meaning as it does "Lord of Mictlampa." In the *Codex Borgia* he is depicted as a skeleton whose bones are picked out in red, thus symbolizing that they are those of a flayed person—a sacrificed captive. The crossways and owl are figured in association with him, as exhibiting his connection with the meeting-place and Sabbath of the witches, who in Mexico were chiefly regarded as vengeful dead women who had perished in child-bed, although wicked mortal women were also attracted to their meetings. The Spanish priesthood were greatly surprised to discover, in Mexico, witches of the same type as those they had tortured and burnt in Spain, and they characteristically concluded that "the Devil" had been instrumental in importing the witch-cult into America.

Sometimes the face and body of Mictlantecutli are painted black, like those of the priests. In several pictures we see him seated opposite Tonatiuh, the Sun-god, as though to symbolize night. In some representations he wears the paper rosettes with which corpses about to be cremated were decorated, and it may

be that these occasionally depict the charms by virtue of which the dead man was thought of as franking his way past the demons and dangers of the Otherworld.

Mictlantecutli, as one of the Tzitzimime demons, was associated with the stars and the star-spangled sky of night. As the interpreter of *Codex Vaticanus A* says: " He descends for souls as a spider lowers itself with its head downwards from the web." This might seem as though Mictlantecutli's inferno was situated aloft, but a little farther on the interpreter tells us that " he is a great lord of the dead, below in hell."

The question arises: was Mictlantecutli merely a god of the departed, or was he the ruler of a place of punishment? Originally he was, I feel, the former and came in time, under pressure of an " ethical " code, to possess the attributes of a punitive deity whose office it was to torment the souls of the wicked. Mictlantecutli was probably only Death, in his most unpleasant form of a skeleton, before the cunning priests of Tenochtitlan considered how useful it would be to scare the wretched " coolies " into slavish and pacific conduct by continually reminding them of horrors to come, did they backslide.

Mictecaciuatl, " Lady of the Place of the Dead," was the consort of Mictlantecutli and appears to be nothing more than a female version of him. A more difficult death-god to explain is Tepeyollotl, " Heart of the Mountains." Sometimes he is represented as a jaguar pure and simple. His hieroglyph, or day-date is the picture of a jaguar, while at other times he is unmistakably depicted as having many of the symbols and attributes of Tezcatlipoca.

The interpreter of the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis* says that the name Tepeyollotl has reference to the echo when it reverberates in a valley from one mountain to another. He adds: " They bestowed the appellation of the tiger (jaguar) on the earth because the tiger is a very courageous animal." Seler believes

him to be a cave-god, and says that he is Tezcatlipoca, in his form as an apparition. It is only in the writings of the interpreters that he is mentioned at all—there are no native Mexican allusions to him—and the precise locality of his worship appears to be unknown, although it seems to have been in vogue in the hot tropical lands of the *Tierras Calientes*, the valleys near the sea-coast, and not on the high plateau of Mexico. There is no doubt that the jaguar was especially worshipped by the people of tropical Gautemala, who, when they encountered this animal in the forest, knelt before it and began to confess their sins! But it seems probable that the jaguar, because it dwelt in caves and because of its terrible nightly roaring, may have come to symbolize the earth in its dangerous aspect of earthquake, or may have been imagined as the spirit of the earth, which was certainly regarded by the Mexicans as a wild and ravening monster.

In the *Codex Vaticanus A* we encounter a passage which says that, during the thirteen signs of the Calendar which were under the influence of Tepeyollotl, four days were set apart in connection with a fast which was made in thankfulness "for the earth's having remained after the Deluge," but that these days were not considered "good or clean." No reason is given for such a conclusion, but it is known that among many barbarous peoples the Deluge, or Flood, was regarded as necessary not so much to cleanse the earth from sin as because the world was growing "old and shabby," as a myth from Sumatra has it.

Sin, in many old mythologies, is symbolized by dirt, or filth, the opposite of order and neatness, and as inimical to efficient ritual on which the well-being of the community depended, especially in regard to its agricultural aspects. If the earth was foul, manifestly it must be cleansed, according to such a tradition or trend of thought. But it was certainly because foulness was thought of as clogging the wheels of effective ritual that it must be removed. The modern

idea of sin, as we conceive it, was a somewhat later development. I believe this to explain the statement that the days alluded to as the festival of Tepeyollotl were regarded as neither "good nor clean." And Tepeyollotl, as the spirit of the earth, would naturally be associated with the Mexican myth of the Deluge.

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