

Concordia Seminary - Saint Louis

Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary

Master of Sacred Theology Thesis

Concordia Seminary Scholarship

6-1-1949

Pagan Elements in the Catholicism of Guatemala

Fred Pankow

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/stm>



Part of the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Pankow, Fred, "Pagan Elements in the Catholicism of Guatemala" (1949). *Master of Sacred Theology Thesis*. 207.

<https://scholar.csl.edu/stm/207>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Concordia Seminary Scholarship at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master of Sacred Theology Thesis by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

PAGAN ELEMENTS IN THE CATHOLICISM OF GUATEMALA

A thesis presented to

the faculty

of

Concordia Seminary

St. Louis, Missouri

by

Fred J. Pankow, Jr.

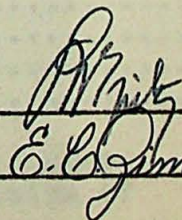
In partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

Master of Sacred Theology

41,286

Approved by



E. L. Zimmermann

(1946?)

52359

BY
4070
C69
M3

OUTLINE

1949
no. 13
C. 2

	Page
Introduction.....	1- 5
I. Similar Religious Teachings and Practices among the Indians of America.....	6-21
A. Similar High-Gods.....	8- 9
B. Similar Ideas Concerning the Creation of the World.....	9-11
C. Similar Beliefs Concerning the Origin of Man.....	11-12
D. Similar Flood Traditions.....	12
E. Similar Beliefs Concerning the Bird and the Serpent.....	12-15
F. Similar Beliefs Concerning Sacramental Eating, Water, Wind.....	15-16
G. Similar Beliefs Concerning Fire....	17-19
H. Similar Use of Sacred Numbers.....	19-20
I. Similar Beliefs Concerning the Survival of the Soul.....	20-21
II. Mayan Religious Teachings and Practices of the Pre-Conquest and Early Colonial Period.....	22-42
A. Their Outward Manifestation in the Customs and Ceremonies of that Period.....	22-26
1. Customs and Ceremonies of the Warriors.....	22-23
2. Customs and Ceremonies of the General Populace.....	24-26
B. Their Outward Manifestation in the Popular Beliefs and Legends of that Period.....	27-42
1. The <u>Popul Vuh</u>	27
2. The Popular Beliefs and Legends of that Period.....	27-42
a) Pantheism and Polytheism..	27-29
b) The Creation of the Universe.....	29-31
c) The Origin of Man.....	31-33
d) The Great Flood.....	33-34
e) The Rainbow.....	34-35
f) The "Alter-ego".....	36-37
g) The Virgin Birth.....	37-39
h) Prophecy.....	39-42
III. Mayan Religious Teachings and Practices Evident in the Catholicism of Guatemala Today.....	43-69
A. Their Outward Manifestation in the Customs and Ceremonies of Today....	43-56
1. The Use of the Cross.....	45-46
2. Sacrifice.....	46-47

3. Dances.....	48-49
4. Paganized Christian Ceremonies	49-54
a) Fiesta de Santo Tomás.....	49-50
b) Fiesta de la Cruz.....	50
c) Holy Week Festivals.....	50-53
d) Christmas Processions.....	53-54
5. Marriage Customs and Ceremonies.....	54-56
B. Their Inward Manifestation in the Traditions and Beliefs of Today....	56-69
1. Nahualism.....	56-59
2. Witchcraft.....	59-62
3. Pagan gods.....	62-66
4. General Superstitions.....	66-69
a) Evil Omens.....	66-67
b) Fate.....	67-68
c) Abstinence.....	68
d) Good and Bad Days.....	68-69
Conclusion.....	70-72

INTRODUCTION

Guatemala is one of the most promising mission fields that the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has ever entered. In the space of two years, as many as ten small groups came to our missionary in Guatemala City asking that they be taught the Lutheran doctrine.

Yet in spite of the enthusiasm manifested by these individual groups, the Lutheran Church in Guatemala faces problems as distressing as those of any other mission field. Directly associated with those problems is the fact that the Roman Catholicism of Guatemala is largely pagan. As the missionary makes his evangelistic calls, he is told by nine-tenths of the people: "We are Catholic; we do not want your religion." Some of them oppose our work openly; one mission-worker has even received anonymous, threatening notes.

Thus if our Lutheran work is to grow unimpeded, the missionary must know just how to deal with that nine-tenths of the population which claims to be Catholic. To deal with those souls wisely, he must know why they think and act as they do. And to possess that knowledge, he must be acquainted with their predominantly pagan background.

It is the purpose of this thesis, then, to demonstrate

that the people of Guatemala are not even truly Roman Catholic, much less Christian. We shall likewise present the reason for this fact, namely, that some teachings and many practices of the Roman Catholic Church in Guatemala were taken over directly from the Indian religions. Hence the title of this thesis shall be: "Pagan Elements in the Teachings and the Practices of Roman Catholicism in Guatemala."

The terms are defined thus: "Pagan Elements" refers not to those non-Christian elements that already exist in historic Roman Catholicism everywhere (e.g., purgatory); but the term refers to non-Christian elements that exist particularly in the Roman Catholicism of Guatemala by virtue of the fact that they were taken over from the Indian religions of that country. "The Teachings" signifies any teachings imparted or permitted to be imparted by the Roman Catholic Churchmen of Guatemala. "Roman Catholicism in Guatemala" is in contradistinction to the Roman Catholicism of any other area (e.g., that of the United States); and what is said of the former does not necessarily apply to the latter.

The problem will be limited in the following manner: The people of Guatemala (only 15,000 are white; 66% are pure Indian) stem predominantly from the Old Maya race; hence a historical introduction on the background of that race has been deemed necessary. Since there has been a fairly close relation between the Guatemalan Indians and those of other American areas, the first chapter represents an attempt to

relate their religion to that of other American tribes; such an introductory chapter will then help us understand how thoroughly pagan the Catholicism of Guatemala is. The second chapter discusses the specific pagan beliefs and customs of the people dominant in the Pre-Spanish and Early Colonial periods. The third chapter will show how the pagan beliefs and ceremonies and customs referred to in chapters one and two are still present--in a modified form at least--in certain teachings and practices of Roman Catholicism in Guatemala. Finally, to prove that the facts presented especially in the third chapter are not based upon biased sources, we are also including a discussion of representative Guatemalan prose and poetry writers; and we shall note that even the novelists and poets consider the paganism of their own country a favorite theme for discussion.

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION:

THE AMERICAN INDIANS AND THE MAYA RACE

The origin of the American Indians and of the "pure" Mayas is unknown. Perhaps the majority of anthropologists support the belief that various Asiatic tribes crossed the Bering Strait to Alaska and finally spread throughout the continent. Other tribes, then, may have come from as far as the Polynesian Islands and mixed with the Asiatic tribes here. Our thesis, however, is not concerned with that problem.

As far as the Mayas themselves are concerned, we shall take as our authority Prof. Lic. Ricardo Castañeda Paganini,¹ of Guatemala City, who divides the history of the Mayas into two periods: the Chanense and the Toltec.

According to Mr. Castañeda, the "pure" Mayas or Chanenses of Central America had--as early as 317 A. D.--developed corn from two wild grasses known as "teocintle" and "tripsacum";² having a dependable supply of food, they could therefore settle down to establish their great culture in Guatemala and near-by areas. They reached their "Golden Age" between 400 and 600 A. D., and then declined. In the 9th and 10th centur-

1. Prof. Castañeda's theories are still in manuscript form at the time of this writing. They were presented to our class in Mayan Civilization at the National University during the summer of 1947. His theories disagree with those traditionally held.

2. For a discussion of the supposed origin of corn, see Morley, S. G., Guía a las Ruinas de Quirigua, pp. 21-23.

ies, numerous Mayan tribes abandoned their Old Empire home in Guatemala and migrated Northward.¹ The majority of the people settled in Yucatán. Others, according to the new theory of Prof. Castañeda, went on to the present site of Mexico City and mingled with the Toltec Indians of the area. This mingling begins the Toltec Period of Mayan history.

The Old Mayas who had migrated to the Valley of Mexico remained there for some two centuries and became thoroughly "Toltec-ized." Nevertheless, they did preserve a separate identity; so that when they had assumed a new language and a new religion (which included the sacrifice of human beings), they still remembered their old romanticized homeland. In the late twelfth century, then, they set out for the land of their forefathers. They traveled by sea and land until they arrived at Yucatán; here one branch of the "Toltec-ized" Mayas remained to establish themselves. Another branch journeyed on to the original home in Guatemala. The former group developed the New Maya Empire that was destroyed by the Spaniards in 1697. The latter took the name of Quiché and in that altered form continues in Guatemala to the present day.

Tribes of related Mayan origin but not using the Quiché language are the Cakchiquel, the Kekchi, the Pokomchi, the Pokomam, and the Tzutuhil.

1. Various reasons for the departure from Guatemala are advanced by archeologists and anthropologists. They include earthquake, war, yellow fever, heavy rains, change in climate, and the like. Perhaps the most acceptable is that of Morley, Op. cit., pp. 39-44; he considers an agricultural catastrophe the most logical explanation.

I. SIMILAR RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES AMONG THE INDIANS OF AMERICA.

A great historian at one time asserted that if we desire to know the history of a country such as France, that we should first study the history of Germany, England, Spain, Italy, and other countries that have had political or social influence upon France. Only then, he believed, can we properly understand the history of France.

Likewise, we cannot fully understand why the people of Guatemala should cling so tenaciously to their pagan beliefs unless we know why Roman Catholic efforts to stamp them out were so unsuccessful; and that lack of success cannot be attributed only to Roman Catholic policies of temporary, then permanent, toleration of paganism. The religious beliefs and practices of Guatemala are partly, at least, the result of a strong historical legacy that had been committed to the majority of American tribes. It was modified by the various groups as they became isolated from one another; but some interchange of religious ideas no doubt continued and still continues--in some cases--to the present day.

The Guatemalan Indian is a product of his past; and we can better understand that past if we possess a broad view of the religious beliefs of American Indians in general. Let us then view the fairly close relation that does exist between the beliefs of the Maya and other American Indians.

The languages of the American red race have not been particularly friendly to abstract ideas; such, at least, is

the contention of D. C. Brinton, former Professor of American Archeology and Linguistics at the University of Pennsylvania.¹ Since many of them have "Einverleibung" as their chief characteristic, they do not have a name for father or mother or brother, but only for my father, your mother, etc.

While the Chinese express modifications and relations of words to the main idea by the position of unconnected syllables, the Greeks and Germans by the terminations of independent words, the Finns by the addition of syllable after syllable to the principle word, the Englishmen by using participles and by position, yet the American Indians have often tried to say everything in one word; in short, they have sought to weld words together into one and to do away with concepts that are not related to other concepts.

The above information, gleaned from the indicated pages of Brinton's volume, provides one key to the understanding of the religious ideas and practices of many American tribes --including the Mayas. They could not, for example, think in terms of one god that existed of and by himself. Instead, they had to think of one god related to other gods and to created things in general. Some might advance this, then, as a reason why there was no conscious monotheism,² and very little notion of immateriality,³ reflected in the beliefs and customs of the American Indians. The "Einverleibung" principle may help us understand, then, why certain fundamental beliefs and customs are common to the majority of the tribes.

-
1. Brinton, Daniel C., Mythe of the New World, pp.18-22.
 2. Schmidt, W., High Gods in North America, p. 19.
 3. Brinton, Op. cit., pp. 60-82.

A. SIMILAR HIGH-GODS.

Similarity in the beliefs of American Indians is indicated by this fact: that all words attempting to express the High-god are derived either 1) from a word referring to something connected with space above, or 2) from a word meaning life manifested by breath.¹

As one reads the Popul Vuh of the Mayas, he continually comes across the name of one of their creating gods--"Cora-zón del cielo."² "Inti," the light of the sun, and "Mama Quilla," the moon, are the main objects of Peruvian worship.³ For the Aztecs, of course, the sun and the moon are likewise the objects of worship,⁴ being called "Lord of the sky."⁵ The same holds for the Algonkins, the Iroquois, the Hidatsa, the Dakota, and the Quichua.⁶

The idea of God connected with a word meaning life manifested by breath is similarly common among the American Indians. Students of the Old Testament original remember that ruah may be translated spirit, wind, or breath--according to the context. Likewise the New Testament words for spirit or soul, pneuma, psyche, and thymos, all come from verb roots describing the motion of wind or breath. A study of Old

1. Brinton, op. cit., p. 60.

2. Recinos, Adrián, Popul Vuh--Las Antiguas Historias Del Quiché, Mexico, 1946. There is no English translation.

3. Réville, Albert, The Native Religions of Mexico and Peru, p. 153.

4. Ibid., p. 39. Visitors to Mexico City can still see the impressive pyramids to the sun and the moon built by the Aztecs.

5. Brinton, op. cit., p. 65.

6. Ibid., p. 62.

English recalls that gust and ghost, breath and breeze, are etymologically the same. It would not seem strange, then, that the American Indians sought to express a relation between spirit or soul and life, between life and breath, between life and wind.

Thus we find that the Incas often adored the gods by kissing the air.¹ Almost every American school-boy knows how much significance the North American Indians have given to the "Great Spirit." As our thesis will point out further, the Quichés of Guatemala worshipped Hurakán; and the name of that god has been immortalized in our word hurricane;² perhaps the word was brought to Guatemala from the Antilles.

We see, then, that the American Indians held very similar ideas of the High-gods.³

B. SIMILAR IDEAS CONCERNING THE CREATION OF THE WORLD.

Anthropologists likewise find similarity in the work of the gods of many American Indians--especially in their work of creation. Like the spirit or "wind" of God brooding over the surface of the waters in Genesis,⁴ so according to the Mixtecs, the Two Winds moved over the slime and ooze of the earth and finally dried the land.⁵ We shall see that in the Mayan tradition, Hurakán--the mighty wind--passed over the sea and called forth the land.

1. Brinton, op. cit., p. 69. Cp. Réville, op. cit., ch.v.

2. This word, which means "a violent storm," is probably of Carib origin.

3. Cf. Schmidt, W., op. cit., and Ursprung der Gottes-idee, Muenster, vol. V., pp. 473-554.

4. Genesis 1:2.

5. Brinton, op. cit., p. 230.

Other tribes, such as the Muscokis¹ and the Athapascas,² represent the counterpart of the spirit--namely, the bird. The Muscokis speak of two pigeons flying over the water, seeking a dry spot. The Athapascas tell of a mighty bird descending to the ocean; its eyes were fire; its glances produced lightning; its wings, flapping in the air, caused thunder. Its descent to the water caused the dry land to appear.

The Omaha Indians have an interesting variation. The creatures, as well as the Creator, were spirits that moved over the matter--seeking rest:

At the beginning all things were in the mind of Wakonda. All creatures, including man, were spirits. They moved about in space between the earth and the stars. They were seeking a place where they could come into a bodily existence.... Dry land appeared; the grasses and the trees grew. The hosts of spirits descended and became flesh and blood. They fed on the seeds and grasses and the fruits of the trees, and the land vibrated with their expressions of joy and gratitude to Wakonda, the Maker of all things.³

All tribes except the Eskimos and the Rootdiggers of California seem to begin with water as the receptacle of everything before time was. Somewhat unlike the ancient Greek legends of a very gradual evolution,⁴ however, the American Indians generally believed in direct creations or rather sudden appearances of created things; before these creations, matter or water had existed in a confused state.

1. Brinton, op. cit., p. 228.

2. Ibid., p. 229.

3. Turnbull, Grace H., Tongues of Fire, p. 10.

4. Reinhold, M., Greek and Roman Classics, Brooklyn, 1947, may be consulted for the Greek theory of evolution; cf. especially pages 298-303.

For a more detailed discussion of the creation myths of the American Indians, the reader is referred to volume II of anthropologist Schmidt's monumental work: Der Ursprung der Gottesidee.¹

C. SIMILAR BELIEFS CONCERNING THE ORIGIN OF MAN.

According to Brinton, no American Indians believed man was derived from an inferior species.² Man is usually born from "Mother Earth." In fact, the earth is actually called by that name among the Peruvians.³ Aztecs painted the earth as a woman with countless breasts,⁴ and the Indians of Tezucoc called her "The Old Woman" or "The Earth Mother."⁵ The western Algonkians referred to the earth as their "Grandmother" from whose womb all nations had issued.⁶ Similar expressions or ideas are employed by the Caribs, the Dakotas, the Nagualists, and--as we shall see--the Mayas.⁷ Indians of North Central California have a striking parallel to the Mayan creation of man; three separate creations are described:

In the first, man was made from birds' feathers; this probably is due to totemic influences. In the second, he was made from sticks, which became human overnight. In the third, his body was formed out of clay, and life was put into the bodies of

1. Die Religionen der Urvoelker Amerikas, Muenster, 1930; of those not mentioned in this paper, cf. especially the Yuki, pp. 58-62; the Pomo, pp. 211-214; the Menominee, pp. 550-561; the Winnebago, pp. 618-635; the Gros Ventres, pp. 673-676; the Arapho, pp. 684-717; and the Cheyenne, pp. 759-763.

2. Brinton, op. cit., p. 270.

3. Ibid., pp. 257-258.

4. Ibid., p. 257.

5. Ibid., p. 259.

6. Ibid., p. 258.

7. The Mayas called the earth Ix-mucane, "the woman who buries."

clay overnight, by the Supreme Being sweating amongst them. ¹

No doubt the creation of man out of clay is a survival of the Genesis creation story. ²

D. SIMILAR FLOOD TRADITIONS.

We can expect the flood tradition of the human race ³ to be reflected in the beliefs of the American Indians. While several tribes speak of a flood before man's creation, or of a flood from which no man escaped, many refer to escape of two or more people by means of a raft, a canoe, climbing a tree or mountain, or hiding in a cave. ⁴ In some cases, even birds appear in a similar capacity as in the Hebrew account. ⁵ The Mayan flood story will be presented in conjunction with other Guatemalan beliefs and customs. But those who desire further data on American flood traditions may refer to Harold Peake's The Flood: New Light on an Old Story. ⁶

E. SIMILAR BELIEFS CONCERNING THE BIRD AND THE SERPENT.

Readers of Guatemalan literature may be surprised at the frequent reference made to birds--especially to the quetzal; they may likewise wonder at the fact that the country's monetary system is based not upon the peso or the

1. Schmidt, Origin and Growth of Religion, p. 272.

2. Genesis 1:26ff.

3. Schmidt's Festschrift, Vienna, 1928, has a collection of several hundred flood stories taken from every area of human culture and compared with one another.

4. Brinton, op. cit., pp. 234-248.

5. Genesis 6ff.

6. New York, 1930.

dólar but upon the quetzal. They may also take notice of the importance that serpents seem to have in the literature and life of that land. But most surprising may be the fact that Kukulcán, the "most revered" of Mayan gods,¹ was a bird-serpent, or feathered serpent.² In other words, the two symbols were combined in one when attempts were made to describe their main god.

The bird and the serpent, more than any other creatures, have figured prominently in the thinking of the American Indians.³ They may be totemic badges.⁴ But whatever their significance, their preeminence demands some attentions.

Brazilian natives regarded a certain bird as a messenger from the souls of the dead.⁵ Peruvian and Mexican Indians still use them for divinations.⁶ The Aztecs were among those tribes that thought that good people became birds after death.⁷

More common, however, may have been their symbolization of the soul, the breath, the wind, and the clouds. The Sioux Indians, for example, believed that thunder was caused when

1. That is the estimation given in Kelsey, V., and Osborne, L., Four Keys to Guatemala, p. 7.

2. The future discussions will demonstrate the pre-eminence of "the feathered serpent."

3. Frazer, J. G., The Golden Bough, provides various illustrations and explanations of the symbolism of birds and serpents on pages 234, 237, 247, 496, 541, 545, 670, 672, 675-7, and 32, 75, 222, 501, 519, 535, 601, 655, 658, and 676, respectively. Although many of Frazer's deductions and conclusions are no longer accepted as valid by leading anthropologists, yet the facts upon which he based them are reliable.

4. Cf. Jacobs, M., and Stern, B. J., Outline of Anthropology, 1947, pp. 169-172.

5. Brinton, op. cit., p. 124.

6. Ibid., p. 124.

7. Ibid., p. 125.

the cloud-bird clapped his wings.¹ Some of our Northwest Coast and Midwest Indians, as well as the Caribs, are known to have held similar theories. The Creeks, the Cherokees, the Dakotas, the Natchez, and the Akanzas honored or worshipped the eagle.² Besides the Mayas,³ the Nahuas, Peruvians, Araucanians, and Algonkins regarded the owl as sacred to the lord of the dead.⁴

The serpent holds an equal place in the imagination of the American Indians--especially those of Guatemala,⁵ where it is represented as a feathered serpent that moves through the heavenly waters (the clouds and the rain).

Nahua myths affectionately call the serpent "our mother."⁶ The emblem of the Inca warriors consisted of two serpents with their tails intertwined.⁷ Numerous American tribes practiced snake-charming, dressed in snake skins, made drums from snake skins, and employed snake skins in divinations.⁸

The traveler to Mexico City finds frequent representation of the eagle-serpent symbol. The bird and the serpent were indeed prominent in the thinking of American Indians. The mysterious activities of these two creatures caused even King Solomon to confess that he did not fully understand

1. Brinton, op. cit., p. 125.

2. Ibid., p. 127. Cf. also Frazer, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

3. This will be alluded to later in the thesis.

4. Brinton, op. cit., p. 128.

5. As will be demonstrated, entire novels have been based upon the activities of snake charmers.

6. Brinton, op. cit., p. 143.

7. Ibid., p. 142.

8. Cf. Ibid., pp. 129-143.

"the way of an eagle in the air, and the way of a serpent upon a rock."¹ And by way of comparison, Christ told his followers to be "wise as serpents, harmless as doves."²

F. SIMILAR BELIEFS CONCERNING SACRAMENTAL EATING, WATER, WIND, AND THUNDERSTORM.

Eating, water, wind, fire, etc., are universals that have contributed to the daily experiences of all peoples, and may therefore be expected to take on symbolic meanings in the beliefs of many.

It should not disturb the Christian, then, if Réville finds "communion, baptism, and sacerdotal confession" among American Indians, as well as "holy water."³ We know that there is no reason why Christ could not have appointed the bread and wine of the Holy Supper as the means through which we receive His body and blood. The Christian communion, moreover, is much more beautiful than the grotesque "communion" of the Mexican Indians, for example:

Thus, at the third great festival in honor of Uitzilopochtli (celebrated at the time of his death), they made an image of the deity in dough, steeped it in the blood of sacrificed children, and partook of the pieces. In the same way the priests of Tlaloc kneaded statuettes of their god in dough, cut them up, and gave them to eat to patients suffering from diseases caused by the cold and wet. The statuettes were first consecrated by a small sacrifice. And so, too, at the yearly festival of the god of fire, Xiuhcutli, an image of the deity, made of dough, was fixed in the top of a great tree which had been brought into the

1. Proverbs 30:19.

2. Matthew 10:16.

3. Réville, *op. cit.*, pp. 179-200. Cf. especially his discussion of Peruvian Cultus and Festivals, ch. vi.

city from the forest. At a certain moment the tree was thrown down, on which of course the idol broke to pieces, and the worshippers all scrambled for a bit of him to eat.¹

Nor does it disturb us to find "water baptisms" among the Cherokees, Aztecs, Peruvians, and--as we shall see--among the Mayas.² Christ chose universals because He knew that His religion would be universal; thus He appointed the water of baptism to be a means of grace. The water of the Christian baptism would truly purify the corrupt human heart. But no such value could come, for example, to the Navajos, who had to thoroughly wash in "purifying" water after they had touched a dead body.

Upon initiation into the mysteries of the Creeks and the Algonkins, even immersion was necessary.³

Other universals have thus become symbolized among the numerous tribes of American Indians. Water containers, such as vases and gourds, figure very significantly into the Mayan and Aztec creation stories. Peruvian Indians used gourds to represent rain; for the Caribs and Tupis, it symbolized the parent of the atmosphere's waters.⁴

Wind and thunderstorm have already been alluded to in connection with Indian conceptions of the High-gods and their work. But we may conclude that beliefs having connection with water are among the most numerous in the American Indian's "theology."

-
1. Réville, op. cit., p. 86ff.
 2. Cf. Brinton, op. cit., pp. 142-160.
 3. Ibid., p. 149.
 4. Ibid., p. 152.

G. SIMILAR BELIEFS CONCERNING FIRE.

The relation between fire and Supreme Being is evident among the American Indians as among every race of mankind. In the Scriptures one can count up more than 400 references to fire in its use on the altar or as a symbol for the presence of God and His manifestation in power or in judgment.¹ Though it is not that common in the Popul Vuh of the Quichés, it does appear with some frequency. Among this continent's indigenous peoples, one might discuss the significance of fire from the following standpoints: as a symbol of deity, as a way of communion with deity, and as a symbol of divine favor.

Mexico's fire-god was called "Lord of the comets", "the ancient father-god", "yellow-face", and similar names. A representative prayer addressed to him is quoted from Bernardino Sahagun:

You, Lord, who art the father and mother of gods and the most ancient divinity, know that there comes here your vassal, your slave; weeping, he approaches with great sadness; he comes plunged in error, having slipped over some wicked sins and some grave delinquencies which merit death; he comes, on account of this, very heavy and oppressed. Our god of pity, who art the sustainer and defender of all, receive in penitence and relieve in his anguish your serf and vassal.²

1. Among the more significant sections one might mention Gen. 15:12-17; Exod. 3:2; 24:17; Num. 11:1; Deut. 4:36; 32:22; Judges 6:21; I Ki. 19:12; II Ki. 1:10-12; I Chr. 21:26; II Chr. 7:1; Ps. 78:14; Is. 10:17; 65:5; Amos 1:4; Lu. 12:49.

2. From Hough, W., Fire as an Agent in Human Culture, p. 127.

Fire was likewise a symbol for deity among the Navajo, Manitou, and Pueblo Indians.¹ The latter described their fire-god as "black spotted with red."

Schmidt states that among many Indian groups God

. . . is described as a 'shining white' or 'like fire'; for example, among the Northwestern Semang, the Southern Andamanese, the Wiyot and Patwin of North Central California, the Lenape (an Algonkin tribe), and the Winnebago (a Sioux tribe influenced by the Algonkins). Among the Maidu of North Central California we are assured that the whole form of the Supreme Being shines like the light of the sun, but that his face is always covered and no one has ever seen it, except the Evil Spirit, who did so once. The Kurnai and Wiradyuri teach that the Supreme Being is surrounded by an aureole of sunrays. Among the Samoyeds a shaman saw him blazing with so bright a light that he could not look at him.

Edward B. Tylor shows how close the relation between fire worship and sun worship was among the American Indians.³ Delaware Indians sacrificed to the sun; Virginian Indians bowed to him as he rose and set; the Algonkins represented the sun as the High-god; the Creeks believed him to be the symbol of the Great Spirit; the Sioux called him the maker and preserver of all things. Julio Jiménez Rueda describes a trial against an Indian charged with adoring "a las estrellas y al fuego, levantándose a media noche y ofreciendo copal, de siete en siete días, especialmente los domingos."⁴

1. Cf. Hough, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-155.

2. In The Origin and Growth of Religion: Facts and Theories, tr. H. J. Rose, New York, 1931, p. 266.

3. Primitive Culture, vol. II, p. 287.

4. Herejías y Supersticiones en la Nueva España: Los Heterodoxos en México, p. 5. Cf. also p. 9.

In order to communicate with the Supreme Being who was represented by fire and by the sun, the Indians naturally used fire; and the High-god showed his favor by accepting the fire. In fact, as we study the folklore of mankind, fire is almost always a gift of the gods--given to show man their favor.

H. SIMILAR USE OF SACRED NUMBERS.

One discovers very quickly how common the use of sacred numbers was among the various tribes of America, especially the Mayas. Though for the Hebrew the number seven was most sacred (it occurs over 350 times in the Old Testament),¹ for the American Indians the number four was--as we shall see--the most significant. The Indians didn't choose a low number because they couldn't count any further, as happened with some primitives; but they had a specific reason for selecting four.²

Lic. Castañeda believes that the number four is prominent in the thinking of the Mayas and other American tribes because the cardinal points were honored, if not adored, by them.³ This theory is supported by other students of the subject.⁴ It seems very logical in the light of the history of the Red race; hunting had made them wander through the confusing forests and mountains, and the four cardinal points must

1. This is easily determined by counting the references in a Complete Concordance.

2. Cf. Blom, Frans, La Vida de los Mayas, México, 1944, pp. 67-72, for a description of the high system of mathematics developed by the Mayas. E.g., they had the zero before it was known in Western Europe.

3. From notes taken in his class; referred to previously.

4. Kelsey and Osborne, op. cit., p. 19.

have been in their minds constantly. We note the same importance of the four cardinal points when we read the literature of other peoples--e.g., the Odyssey. Their predominance in Aztec thinking is quickly noted in reading a work like La Religión de los Aztecas.¹ The Indian cross--present before the Advent of Occidental Civilization--can also be explained as a representative of the four cardinal points.²

I. SIMILAR BELIEFS CONCERNING THE SURVIVAL OF THE SOUL.

The sentence "There is no virtue if there is no immortality," taken from Dostoievski's novel, The Brothers Karamazov, has become proverbial because it seems to speak the universal mind. The American Indians likewise felt that death could not end all; if it did, then man could live as wickedly as he pleased--as long as he got by with it. For them, too, this life was intrinsically incomplete. Thus the much-quoted missionary Charlevoix may be right in asserting: "The belief which is best established among our Americans (Indians) is that of the immortality of the soul."³ Perhaps his statement could be ascribed to the rest of mankind, too; for Frazer found belief in immortality (or at least in the survival of the soul) so universal that he had to use three volumes to tell about it.⁴

1. By Alfonso Caso, México, 1945.

2. So think Kelsey & Osborne in the work referred to previously, as well as Senor Castañeda.

3. The original statement is found in his Journal Historique, Paris, 1740, p. 351. It has been quoted in various works on American Indian religions.

4. Cf. Frazer, The Belief in Immortality and the Worship of the Dead, 3 vols., London, 1922.

Some American tribes even have a hell for the wicked. Eskimos describe the place of torment thus: "There is no sun there, but perpetual darkness, and howling storms of snow and ice."¹ The Mayas, as we shall see, made frequent references to "xibalbao", which is perhaps comparable to the Hebrew "sheol"; it does not necessarily denote hell, although some erroneously believe so.²

To the discussion of the previous pages we could add other instances of similarity in the pagan beliefs and customs of the American Indians. We could discuss, for instance, similarity in prayer, in sacrifice, and the like; but some allusions to them have been made and will be made in future chapters. The previous pages should suffice, then, to lead us into an understanding of the fundamental beliefs of the American Indians, as well as the resultant religious customs. We should now have the stage "set" for our study of specific Guatemalan beliefs and customs. We should already have some conception why Rome at first tolerated the pagan elements with reluctance, and later actually took some of them over into the Catholicism of the country.

Thus with this view of indigenous beliefs and customs as a whole, let us now focus our attention upon the Guatemalan Indian beliefs and customs of the Pre-Conquest and Early Colonial eras, and observe how they have contributed to the Catholicism of that country.

1. Zwemer, Samuel M., The Origin of Religion, p. 224.
 2. Blom, Frans, op. cit., p. 49, is among them.

II. MAYAN RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES OF THE PRE-CONQUEST AND EARLY COLONIAL PERIOD.

A. THEIR OUTWARD MANIFESTATION IN THE CUSTOMS AND CEREMONIES OF THAT PERIOD.

In order to understand many of the Indian customs and ceremonies that the Roman Catholicism of Guatemala has taken over into its ritual or permitted to be observed on holy days, we should have some acquaintance with the customs and ceremonies as they existed at the time of the Spanish Conquest. We shall consider these customs and ceremonies from two standpoints: 1) those of the warriors and 2) those of the general populace.

1. Customs and Ceremonies of the warriors.

If the gods were to help the Indian soldiers in their encounter with the enemy, the soldiers had to be worthy of that help. They had 1) to show respect for the gods and 2) to purify themselves.

One source tells us,¹ therefore, that a few days before a battle with the Spaniards, the soldiers of Tecum Uman (the last of the Mayan kings) bled themselves, fasted, abstained from sex relations, and made other plans to please the gods. They prepared a great religious ceremony, for which they brought their great gods Awilix and Jacawitz from the mountain hiding place. They marched in impressive procession to the temple, the "house of the great god Tojil."

1. Morescier, Alfredo, El Último Maya, pp. 72-76.

An important phase of the visit to the image of the great god was the observance of the famous Indian war dance.¹ The king himself joined his warriors in a dance that roused them to a wild frenzy.

Perhaps the most important part of the entire ceremony was the demonstration of the most sacred image of the great god Tojil. This manifestation of the statue was the first to be made for generations. The effect of this portion of the ceremony was profound. But more profound was its counter-effect. We present a free translation of the passage that describes it:

Upon seeing it (the image), there arose a great acclamation. The various instruments of war and of worship sounded forth. But suddenly, a great silence fell upon the people; and soon all were sighing and weeping: they had seen tears in the eyes of the image. The god was weeping for his people.²

None of the other sources considered gave descriptions of the customs and ceremonies of warriors in that day. The previous examples should suffice, however, to give us a sample of the outward manifestation of Mayan religious teachings and practices during the indicated period.³

1. Morescier, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 78. The original reads as follows: "Al verle, resonó una inmensa aclamación. Y rugieron las trompas de guerra, los tunes, pitos y caracoles de los templos. Pero de pronto se hizo un gran silencio de angustia; y en seguida todos gimieron y luego lloraron a gritos: habían visto que Tojil tenía lágrimas en los ojos. Nuestro dios lloraba por su pueblo."

3. Other scattered references to the customs and ceremonies of the warriors are spread throughout Morescier's work. However, they are of an incidental nature and add little information for description.

2. Customs and Ceremonies of the General Populace.

Perhaps the majority of Indian ceremonies observed by the general populace represent an attempt to find help from the gods. Thus prayer forms the core of their ceremonies.

When prayers are offered to the gods, the Indians generally use incense in their ceremonies so that the prayers may be carried upward to the home of the gods. Perhaps the most common type of incense is copal.¹ Indians have used that type of incense from the earliest days of the Old Mayan Empire; as we shall note later, the Roman Church has taken over its use in Catholic ceremonies.

Another kind of incense, likewise having the same career as copal, is that called pom.² It is a vegetal rosin taken from the pine tree and prepared in the form of paste. Its use not only carried the "word" aloft to the gods, but its aroma also helped make the people feel more religious.

While many Indian ceremonies were designed to seek help from the gods, there were ceremonies and customs intended merely to please the gods or to entertain the general populace. Perhaps the best example of the latter type is the "Fiesta de Año Nuevo."³ The New Year's festival, associated with a change in nature in tropical Guatemala, reminded the people of the never-to-be-forgotten tradition that the gods had at one time sent a great flood to destroy wicked people.

1. García, J. Luis, Leyendas Indígenas de Guatemala, pp. 74-75.

2. Ibid., p. 49.

3. Morescier, op. cit., p. 78ff.

Thus ceremonies were observed to please gods and goddesses and so to avert further disasters. At the same time, these ceremonies afforded the general populace with an emotional outlet and an opportunity for recreation.

Morescier, again, gives us the best account of what the New Year's ceremonies included.¹ There was, for example, the "Baile del volador" (dance of the flyer). A high pole with a gyrating square framework stood in a prominent place. Four athletes, dressed in birds' feathers, each mounted one end of the framework. As the framework whirled about, each would in turn tie himself to an end and be turned with the "gyrator," suspended horizontally in the air. These "birds", flying through the air, represented the four seasons of the year. Each turn of the framework represented one day of the year. This "dance" is still popular among modern Mayas and preserves some of its pagan significance. Closely allied with the habit of dressing in birds' feathers is the belief in nagualism (or nahualism), to be discussed later.

The "Baile del venado," another event of the day, likewise demonstrates the habit of ascribing human qualities to animals--including a soul.² It is a dance in which the men, dressed as animals, complain of man's cruelty to the beasts of the field.

The third great dance, celebrated on that day, is the "Baile de la culebra."³ A snake charmer calls to himself

1. Op. cit., pp. 29-37.

2. Ibid., p. 35.

3. Ibid., p. 34.

all types of snakes, has them go to sleep or curl about his body, and then has them disappear. The association of the snake with the occult sciences of the witch doctors, still prominent today, is partially manifested in the "dance of the snake." It has helped the "snake-dance" survive together with the previous two dances.

Other dances executed to celebrate the New Year include many which defy full explanation. They are best stated in terms of the language of the Indians, being called the dance of "ixtzul," of "junajup coy," of "toncontin," and of "los cojos."¹ They exist only in scattered areas today, and have lost much of their pagan significance.

These, then, are the major activities of "El Día de Año Nuevo" in the Kiché kingdom of the Pre-Conquest era. All ceremonies have some relation to the pagan beliefs of the Old Mayas, and some still exist today; they are performed on the holy days of the Roman Catholic Church. Visitors to the more purely Indian areas of Guatemala can still observe them with their own eyes.

Although the dances of the warriors have largely become extinct, those of the general populace continue unmolested in this very century. They demonstrate the ineffectiveness of Roman efforts to win the people for true Christianity and substitute something better than their old paganism.

1. Morescier, op. cit., p. 36.

B. THEIR INWARD MANIFESTATION IN THE POPULAR
BELIEFS AND LEGENDS OF THE TIME.

1. The Popul Vuh.

Late one evening in 1688, while Brother Francisco Ximénez sat dozing over his books, an Indian friend entered to bring him a long-lost manuscript known as the Popul Vuh.¹ It is a compend of the major traditions of the Mayas, and is commonly called "The Bible of the Quichés." The manuscript was written by Diego Reynoso (called Sajbachin Ax by the Indians) soon after the conquest; the author had learned the Spanish alphabet, and therewith wrote the entire Popul Vuh from memory, in his native tongue.

Many of the popular beliefs and legends to be considered in this section are taken from secondary sources that have simplified the accounts in the Popul Vuh. The latter is too unorganized to permit proper discussion as such. Nevertheless, those who seek a full understanding of the faith of the Mayas will find it necessary to read the Popul Vuh. It is the best 16th century presentation of the teachings and practices of a religion that still pervades the Roman Catholicism of Guatemala.

2. The Popular Beliefs of the Time.

a) Pantheism and Polytheism.

One cannot read a single chapter of the Popul Vuh

1. Cf. Samayoa, Carlos, Cuatro Suertes, pp. 153-157.

without being impressed by the importance given to the gods and goddesses of the Mayas. Nor is the Popul Vuh the only early work that gives so much space to the Indian gods and their work. The Memorial tepanatláneco, the título de los señores de Totonicapán, the Manuscrito de Francisco Calel Tzumpam, various other títulos and manuscritos, and the writings of Fray Bartolomé de las Casas and Bernal Díaz del Castillo also tell us much about the high Mayan deities.¹

In addition to all these sources, we find that modern Guatemalan literature which treats Pre-Conquest and Early Colonial themes abounds in references to the Mayan gods and goddesses.

Since the ancient beliefs in Mayan gods persists in a modified form in Guatemala today, we shall devote a number of pages to a discussion of those beliefs.

Mayan gods were, for example, identified with planets. The general populace often referred to "the father sun", and to him they built temples as grand as those as Chuc Zunil and Quiriguá.² The Mayas also spoke of "our mother the moon."³ The highest of all gods, however, was Cucumatz (often spelled Gugumatz and equivalent to Kukulcán or Cuculkán).⁴ Samuel G. Morley, in a magazine article,⁵ describes him as

1. Cf. Luis Antonio Díaz y Vasconcelos, Apuntes para la historia de la literatura guatemalteca, pp. 65-114.

2. Morescier, op. cit., p. 3.

3. García, op. cit., p. 171.

4. Samayoa, Madre milpa, pp. 143-144.

5. Cf. National Geographic, LX, 122, for a full discussion of Mayan gods and their attributes.

"...the serpent bird, a fearsome mythological conception, with the body, feet, and wings of a bird, the head of a serpent with a forked tongue, and a human head issuing from its mouth." Another Mayan god of considerable importance is Tojil, also known as Hurakán or "Corazón del cielo." Samayoa lists a number of lesser gods, together with their titles:

...Humahau, el señor de las cuevas y los subterráneos; Kibalbé, el taciturno dios de los muertos; Ek Ajau, el negro capitán que siempre ayuda en sus empresas al dios de la guerra; Chac, el señor de la lluvia, en cuya barriga de sapo está el jeroglífico de las piedras preciosas como símbolo de las lluvias; Hurakán, el señor de los torbellinos; Xaman Ek, el que guía a los comerciantes en los caminos; los cuatro Bacabs, los que sostienen sobre sus hombros las cuatro esquinas del cielo; Ixshel, el arco iris, la fresca y deleitante esposa de Itzamná el mején predilecto de Hunabkú; el señor de las estrellas; Kaprakán, el sombrío dios de los terremotos; el señor de la luna, el de los cazadores, el de los pescadores, el de los ríos y el de las lagunas.¹

The preceding paragraphs have introduced us to the most important deities of the Mayan race; and we shall note in a later chapter that many Guatemalan Indians still worship them.

b) The Creation of the Universe.

As has been stated previously, the work ascribed to Mayan gods by the Indians of Guatemala is very similar to that ascribed by anthropologists to other Indian gods. This is particularly true of the work of creation. We translate freely the opening paragraphs of the Popul Vuh. The reader will note its similarity to the first verses of Genesis:

1. Cuatro suertes, p. 176.

This is the story of how everything was in a state of suspense, everything was in a state of calm, in silence; nothing moved, all was quiet, and the existence of heaven was empty.

This is the first discourse. There was not yet any man, nor any animal, nor birds, fish, lobsters, trees, stones, caves, ravines, herbs, nor forests; only the sky existed.

The face of the earth did not show itself. There existed only the sea in its calmness and the sky in all its expanse.

There was nothing together which could make noise, nor was there anything that could move, nor agitate itself, nor make a noise in the sky.

There was nothing walking; there was only the water in repose, the peaceful, lonely sea. There was nothing gifted with existence.

There was only immobility and silence in the obscurity, in the night. There was only the Creator, the Former, Tepeu, Gucumatz, the Progenitors; they were in the water surrounded by brightness. They were hidden under green and blue feathers, therefore they are called Gucumatz. Their nature is that of great wisemen, of great thinkers. Thus the sky and also "Corazón del cielo" existed in this manner, for the latter is the name of God and that is how He is called.

Then came the word; Tepeu and Gucumatz came together in the darkness, in the night, and Tepeu and Gucumatz talked among themselves. They consulted among themselves and meditated; they agreed, they united their words and their thoughts.

Then He manifested Himself with brightness, while they were meditating that man should appear at the break of dawn. Then they prepared the creation and growth of the trees and the cane and the birth of life and the creation of man. In the darkness and in the night this was arranged by "Corazón del cielo," who is called Hurakán.¹

1. Recinos, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90. The Spanish text, translated from the original Indian tongue, is as follows: "Esta es la relación de cómo todo estaba en suspenso, todo en calma, en silencio; todo inmóvil, callado, y vacía la extensión del cielo. Esta es la primera relación, el primer discurso. No había todavía un hombre, ni un animal, pájaros, peces, cangrejos, árboles, piedras, cuevas, barrancas, hierbas ni bosques: sólo el cielo existía. No se manifestaba la faz de la tierra. Sólo estaban el mar en calma y el cielo en tda su extensión. No había nada junto, que hiciera ruido, ni cosa alguna que se moviera, ni se agitara, ni hiciera ruido en el cielo. No había nada

Although the preceding selection is much cruder than the Genesis account, certain parallels do appear. As one follows the paragraphs of the Popul Vuh in which the actual creation is described, the parallels become more obvious. In dividing the sea and the land, for example, the creating god says: "Let it be done thus: Let the emptiness be filled. Let this water draw back and withdraw from space, let the earth come forth and become firm."¹ The actual creation of the earth was "by the word," as a later paragraph indicates: "This in truth was how the earth was created; they said 'Earth' and in an instant the earth was made."² For further treatment of this tradition, cf. J. Luis García's work.³

c) The Origin of Man.

According to the Popul Vuh, there were four separate

que estuviera en pie; sólo el agua en reposo, el mar apacible, solo, y tranquilo. No había nada dotado de existencia. Solamente había inmovilidad y silencio en la obscuridad, en la noche. Sólo el Creador, el Formador, Tepeu, Gucumatz, los Progenitores, estaban en el agua rodeados de claridad. Estaban ocultos bajo plumas verdes y azules, por eso se les llama Gucumatz. De grandes sabios, de grandes pensadores es su naturaleza. De esta manera existía el cielo y también el Corazón del Cielo, que éste es el nombre de Dios y así es como se llama. Llegó aquí entonces la palabra, vinieron juntos Tepeu y Gucumatz. Hablaron, pues, entre sí. Hablaron, consultando entre sí y meditando; se pusieron de acuerdo, juntaron sus palabras y su pensamiento. Entonces se manifestó con claridad, mientras meditaban, que cuando amaneciera debía aparecer el hombre. Entonces dispusieron la creación y crecimiento de los árboles y los bejucos y el nacimiento de la vida y la creación del hombre. En las tinieblas y en la noche (se dispuso así) por el Corazón del Cielo, que se llama Hurakán."

1. Ibid., p. 91.

2. Ibid., p. 91.

3. Op. cit., pp. 221ff.

creations of man: 1)out of clay, 2)out of wood, 3)out of fiber, and 4)out of ground corn. Summarizing the long discussion in the Popul Vuh, we find that the first attempt to make man out of clay failed. Not only were these first men clumsy and unable to move their heads or to separate their legs, but they were entirely irreligious. They never prayed to the gods, nor did they think about them; but they spent all their time eating and sleeping. The vindictive gods thus sent heavy rains to wash away the substance of their bodies.

In their second effort to create a dignified man, the gods resorted to wood as the base for the body. Yet the final result was again frustrating. The second generation of men was equally irreligious. Since the gods could not wash away their bodies with rains (for the wood could not be made to sink), the gods sent volcanoes to destroy the ungrateful creatures. Since the volcanoes could not kill but only imprison the men in lava, the gods sent carrion birds to pluck out the eyes, nerves, brain, and other vital portions.

One of the disappointing features of the men of clay and the men of wood was that they could not move about gracefully. To solve that difficulty, the gods now determined to make the third set of men out of fiber, or cibaque (also known as cité). But the gods went to the other extreme. The new set of men was so agile that the gods could not catch any of the men; they could outrun the gods. They could look in every direc-

tion and see the gods coming. Since these creatures were as irreligious as their forebears, the gods had to send a hurricane and thus destroy them.

The creators were about to despair of ever forming a religious man. But in their despair they came across the goddess Ixmucané making dough out of ground corn. At last, thought the gods, they had found the correct base for human bodies. They made four captains out of the dough, gave each of them a bride, and sent them into the four directions. Although one pair was sterile, the other three became the ancestors of the human race.

For further discussion of the origin of man according to Mayan tradition, cf. García's work, referred to previously. García includes a tradition about man's direct descent from the gods.

d) The Great Flood.

As the previous section suggests, there exist several distinct Guatemalan legends of man's destruction, just as they exist of man's creation. Morescier has recorded one such legend for us, which we give in free translation:

Man's pride and impiety reached such heights that the gods became exasperated and decided to punish him. The heavens darkened and the sky was melted in rain; lightning flashed, the storm cracked something awful, and the thunderbolt scattered death everywhere; when Hurakán broke his chains, the tempest sounded dreadful; the sea, being whipped up, stirred in its bed, untied its frightful waves and demolished its shores; Kabrakán shook the earth and amidst fearful roarings it swallowed up the best (greatest) part! Everything was desolation and ruin!

And then the morning star, Ri Ekoccij, titillated for the first time. And the gods had com-

passion on man. They calmed the fury of the elements; the earth no longer trembled; the rain ceased, the sky cleared up; the dawn shined; Hurakán returned to his caves; the sea became peaceful and murmuring. A divine breath revived the creation, which became fresh and luxuriant, like the first time that it emerged from chaos. Peace returned to the entire universe, and tranquility and happiness returned to the heart of man.¹

The Popul Vuh, though alluding to a destruction of mankind by water, gives much space to a destruction by volcanoes and carrion birds. The account is so confused and so fantastic that it would be difficult to present a clear translation thereof. Those desiring to investigate that legend can find it in the Recinos version.² García recounts the tradition in his work.³

e) The Rainbow.

The Mayas have their own naive explanation for the existence of the rainbow. Although some Christians feel⁴ that the

1. Morescier, op. cit., pp. 29-30. The original reads: "La soberbia del hombre y su impiedad exasperaron a los dioses y decidieron castigarle. Y entonces se oscureció el cielo y se deshizo en lluvia; fulguró el relámpago, estalló pavorosa la tormenta y el rayo sembró el exterminio y la muerte por doquier; la tempestad fué horrisona al romper sus cadenas Hurakán; el mar embravecido se agitó en su lecho, desató su tremebundo oleaje y arrasó las playas; Kabrakán sacudió la tierra y entre bramidos espantosos se tragó la mejor parte! Todo fué desolación y ruina! Y entonces titiló por vez primera la Estrella Matutina, Ri Ekoccij. Y los dioses tuvieron piedad del hombre. Calmaron la furia de los elementos; la tierra ya no tembló más; cesó la lluvia, despejóse el cielo; brilló la aurora; volvió a sus cuevas Hurakán; el mar se tornó apacible y rumoroso. Un soplo divino reanimó la creación, y ésta se presentó fresca y lozana, como la vez primera que salió del caos. Volvió la paz al universo entero y la tranquilidad y la alegría al corazón del hombre."

2. Op. cit., pp. 100ff.

3. Op. cit., p. 241.

4. It is generally held that Gen. 9:9-17 teaches that God at this time instituted the rainbow.

rainbow has existed from the time of creation and that God merely appointed the rainbow to be a sign of mercy to future generations, the Mayan legend has a unique reason for its presence after rain. The following tradition, like those preceding, is still accepted as authentic by some inhabitants of Guatemala. According to the Guatemalan legend,¹ a long dry spell threatened the lives and crops of the people, and there seemed no escape from starvation except that of transporting the water from a distant river to their crops. Asking the help of the gods in their enterprise, the Indians ignited all the trees along the river and thus caused the water to rise in the form of clouds. The gods did help--guiding the clouds over the people's crops. Rain, however refused to fall.

Fearing that their efforts were in vain, the Indians attempted to burst the clouds with arrows. Since the clouds were so high, however, they were to be reached only with arrows shot from the huge bow of the semi-god Balam-Acap. It seemed that no one could draw the bow of that legendary demi-god to its greatest tension; some could hardly lift it. Finally a giant stranger appeared to shoot arrows from the historic bow. When his arrows by-passed the clouds, he became furious. Taking the bow by one end, he flung it into the sky. The rain came down in torrents, but the bow remained in the heavens. It can still be seen when the sun comes out from behind the rain clouds.

1. In Samayoa, Cuatro suertes, pp. 161-173.

f) The "Alter-ego."

Some 16th-century Spanish theologians did not believe that the Indian had a soul. Almost all of them felt that the negro possessed none and for that reason--in part, at least--they encouraged the bringing of negro slaves to America. The Indians and negroes themselves, however, were sure that they had the god-given "breath of life." More than that, the Indians believed in "twin souls", or in nahualism. According to that belief, which exists to this day, there is an "animate or inanimate object, generally an animal, which stands in a parallel relation to a particular man, so that the weal and woe of a man depend upon the fate of the nahual."¹

Perhaps the best-known illustration of the belief in nahualism, or in an "alter-ego," is the story of the death of Tecún-Umán, the last of the Mayan kings. The account of Morescier is herewith given in free translation:

And then...Tecún-Umán...encountered Pedro Alvarado and...defied his enemy to fight him man to man. He (Tecún-Umán) invoked his nagual and threw himself upon him; because he had invoked his nagual (also spelled nahual) he could throw himself upon him with greater fierceness. But Pedro Alvarado had been waiting for him steadfastly and ran him completely through with his lance. And it happened that when Tecún-Umán died, his nagual disappeared; that nagual was a beautiful quetzal.²

1. Frazer, *op. cit.*, p. 687.

2. *Op. cit.*, pp. 84-85. The original reads: "Y entonces...Tecún-Umán...se abrió paso hasta enfrentarse con el Tunatiú Don Pedro y...desafió a su enemigo para luchar de hombre a hombre. Y se le fué encima con arrojo...invocó a su nagual y así pudo levantar el vuelo en forma de águila y se le fué encima con mayor fiereza; pero el Tunatiú lo esperó a pie firme y lo atravesó de parte a parte con su lanza. Y sucedió que al caer muerto el Rajpop, desapareció su nagual, que era un quetzal lindísimo."

The fate of either of the "twin souls" affects the other, as the preceding quotation illustrates. Some versions of the death of Tecún-Umán maintain that the quetzal dropped dead at the prince's feet instead of disappearing; others relate that Alvarado first killed the quetzal, and this fact caused Tecún-Umán to give up the fight and die by Alvarado's lance. In any event, the death of the one brought the death of the other.

A less-known but equally clear illustration of the Mayan belief in nahualism is found in a historical tale about Cortez, conqueror of the New Spain.¹ It happened that among the spoils of a newly-conquered town, the Spanish general found an attractive Indian maiden. When he desired to possess her, he heard a loud leopard roar. It was her nahual, he was told. After searching long and hard for the animal, and seeing him nowhere, he returned to the place where he had secluded the maiden. She had disappeared--probably being carried to safety by the leopard.

The manner in which that belief in nahualism continues un~~ti~~ to modern times will be considered in a following chapter.

g) The Virgin Birth.

The Indians of Guatemala would not find it hard to subscribe to the virgin birth of Christ, for they themselves know the Popul Vuh legend of the virgin birth of Xbalanqué and Junajup. That tradition, crude as it is, has been re-

1. In Samayoa, Madre milpa, pp. 113-124.

told in several secondary sources. We are following that of Samayoa.¹ The scene of the tale is on a mountain where a black tree had appeared quite suddenly one morning--bearing human skulls as its fruits. Ixquic, the virgin daughter of Cuchumaquic, comes to visit the tree contrary to the orders of her father. The skulls speak to her, and ask her to extend her hand. One of the skulls deposits a saliva-like substance into her hand, but Ixquic notes that it disappears rapidly before her very eyes. Some months after her return home, her father takes note of her condition and asks who dishonored her. She affirms that she has been near no man. But the father refuses to believe her, and orders his servants to take her into the woods and kill her, returning with her heart. Ixquic, however, succeeds in dissuading the servants from their plan. She leads them to the tree of skulls and suggests that they place their vase beneath it. A red liquid flows from one skull and coagulates in the vase, forming a heart. The servants return with that heart, which the father sacrifices to the gods. Ixquic goes to a lonely spot, and there gives birth to twins who perform great deeds for their people.

Students of Mayan religion oftankmake the mistake of placing this virgin birth in parallel relation to that of Christ. There are, of course, certain fundamental differences. The one is a fantastic fable accepted by the ignorant Indians of Guatemala, the other is a revealed truth be-

1. In Cuatro suertes, pp. 185-192.

lieved by well-educated but humble Christians. The one was written down centuries after it was alleged to have taken place, the other was prophesied centuries before it occurred. Moreover, the Mayan account has been challenged with the possibility that it is a variation of the Christian account, having been adapted by the writer of the Popul Vuh (who wrote after the Conquest).

h) Prophecy.

The Jews were not the only people to have prophets. Many Mayan priests claimed the two-fold ability of "forth-telling" and "fore-telling". According to tradition, the Mayas knew that a white people would come to conquer them and teach them a new religion. That prophecy was uttered to them publicly upon several occasions. It is reputed that Balum Votán, one of the Mayan kings that led them into Guatemala centuries before the Conquest, uttered a prophecy somewhat on this order:¹

The fog of time is lifting before my eyes.... From the other side of the sea, I can see three ships coming. There is a strange sign on their sails. From those ships there descend men with golden beards who have conquered (or captured) lightning (a reference to cannons) and the bark of the dog of the tempest; they keep it in long pipes that inflict death. Shadows. Blood, much blood. The pale god of these people is nailed to wood and our race does not understand it.... Night falls upon our gods. Hurakán, the great serpent with the feathers of a quetzal, the Great Grandfather and the Great Grandmother, go in shameful flight. Cucumatz...sees wars come and predicts hunger and ruin. The kingdoms are destroyed; the cornfields are razed. The grand-

1. The complete account is in Samayoa, Madre milpa, pp. 139-149.

children of our grandchildren walk the roads of the viceroys in droves, as if sleep-walking. (The god) Ajpuch rests neither by day nor by night.¹

Although Balum Votán's work was to prosper for a time, the prophecy clearly predicted a complete destruction of his work and teachings.

Few intelligent people, of course, would accept the details of the above prophecy as genuine. Instead of describing three large ships with strange flags, instead of picturing men with red beards who bring a god nailed to a cross, instead of speaking of the rule of the viceroys, one would expect a genuine prophecy to consist largely of indefinite and inexplicit forebodings. Despite the fact that the legend has been greatly embroidered with anachronistic details, it is generally believed that the Mayas had a "prophecy" of the coming of an occidental people. A supposedly genuine monolith of the Pre-Conquest era bears the following inscription:

Know this, that there will come a time in which you will despair because of the calamities that are to come upon you. Know that certain

1. The particular paragraph translated reads as follows in Spanish: "La neblina del tiempo que está por venir se deshace ante mis ojos.... Del otro lado de este mar, de ciudades que se esconden tras el horizonte remoto, veo venir tres barcas grandes. En sus velas hay un signo extraño. Descienden de ellas hombres con barbas de oro, que han cautivado el rayo y el ladrido del perro de la tempestad en largos canutos que dan la muerte. Sombra. Sangre, mucha sangre. El pálido dios de los tehules está clavado en un madero y nuestra raza no lo comprende.... La noche cae sobre nuestros dioses. Hurakán, la gran serpiente con plumas de

men wearing clothes, not naked like you, dressed from head to foot, armed, terrible and cruel men, will come perhaps tomorrow or a later date, and they will destroy all these buildings, which will be converted into habitations for owls and mountain cats, and the grandeur of this court will cease.¹

Tradition reports, finally, that the main witch doctor of Tecún-Umán pronounced a prophecy in the following words--a few years before the Spanish Conquest:

...the oracle announces a loss of lands; new persecutions, great sorrows. The line of our kings is about to become extinct.... Our people are dying.²

Prophecies such as those listed above were declared to the warriors and the general populace prior to the collapse of the Mayan Empire. It has been said that these prophecies contributed to the surrender and destruction of various Mayan tribes.

quetzal, el Gran Abuelo y la Gran Abuela, van en vergonzosa desbandada.... Cucumatz...ve venir las guerras y presagia las hambres y las ruinas. Los reinos son destruidos. Los maizales, arrasados. Los nietos de nuestros nietos van por los caminos de los virreyes, en manadas, como sonámbulos. Ajpuch no descansa ni de día ni de noche."

1. J. Antonio Villacorta C. and Carlos A. Villacorta, Arqueología Guatemalteca, 1927 ed., p. 87. The Spanish text of the prophecy reads as follows: "Sabed...que ha de venir tiempo que desesperéis por las calamidades que os han de sobrevénir. Sabed que unos hombres vestidos, no desnudos como vosotros, de pies a cabeza, y armados, hombres terribles y crueles, vendrán quizá mañana o pasado mañana, y destruirán todos estos edificios, que se convertirán en habitaciones de lechuzas y de gatos de monte, y cesará la grandeza de esta corte." The quotation appears in similar form in Samayoa, Cuatro suertes, p. 133.

2. In Morescier, op. cit., p. 31. The Spanish reads: "...el oráculo anuncia pérdida de tierras; nuevas persecuciones, grandes dolores. La raza de nuestros reyes está próxima a extinguirse.... Nuestro pueblo está moribundo."

It can be safely said that the Indian belief in prophecy, together with the beliefs in polytheism, pantheism, nahualism, and the like, has had a profound effect upon the life and thought of the descendants of the Mayas--so profound, in fact, that those beliefs can still be identified in the lives of many guatemaltecos today.

Tecún-Umán, as he lay dying upon the battlefield, bade his conquered Mayas farewell; but before he breathed his last, he had them promise--no matter what their destiny might be--to keep alive the indigenous faith of their ancestors and to maintain inviolate the customs of the Mayas. The following chapter illustrates that their promise¹ has evidently been kept.

1. Such is the tradition recorded in Morescier, op. cit., p. 86. Whether the promise was actually made is a matter of conjecture.

III. MAYAN RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES
EVIDENT IN THE CATHOLICISM OF GUATEMALA TODAY.

A. THEIR OUTWARD MANIFESTATION IN THE
CUSTOMS AND CEREMONIES OF TODAY.

Guatemalan Indians have, indeed, accepted the outward form of Roman Catholicism. But even in spite of that fact, various outward habits of the Pre-Conquest Mayas continue to exist--habits associated intimately with their religious thought. For example, Erna Fergusson writes:

The truly indigenous Indian persists, however corruptly, in a few ceremonies. Something of the ancient cult of the Plumed Serpent may lie buried under the trivial Snake Dance still presented in Los Altos. There may be faint memories of sun-worship in El Volador, which in Mexico ties in so closely with the Aztec calendar. Old animistic rites certainly underlie animal dances like El Venado, The Deer....¹

In a later chapter she writes: "There are Indian fiestas, often of Catholic inception, but never quite free of pagan rites and beliefs."²

Prof. Chester Lloyd Jones has the following to say:

The social life of the Indian population finds its most distinctive features in the traditional ceremonies and religious rites connected with Christianity and independent of it. All but a very minor fraction of the people of Guatemala are nominally Catholics. In the capital and larger towns, where ladino influences dominate, religious observances conform to the

1. In Guatemala, p. 231.

2. Ibid., p. 265. Miss Fergusson demonstrates a pro-Catholic and anti-German spirit throughout her work. But though she seems to imply charges against Protestant minds that criticize the present state of religion in Guatemala, she is honest enough to make admissions like those quoted. Thus anti-Catholic statements from her pen are of particular interest.

accepted Christian standards; but in the Indian communities they shade off into a wide range of ceremonies and beliefs, some indicating preconquest origin and distinctly non-Christian character.

Many are disposed to consider the variant beliefs of the Indian population unorthodox but innocent popular supplements to the faith. The ceremonies at the country shrines and elsewhere, it is argued, are basically Christian. "They worship the same God here in the church and there in the open air." Ethnologists find the non-religious ceremonials and those connected with worship in the Indian communities of much more complicated nature.¹

A specific illustration of Professor Jones' contention is given in connection with his discussion of certain agricultural practices:

Early in the growing period special religious services or water masses are held in the fields in temporary structures, the paths to which are strewn with pine needles and spanned with arches. Nominally these are Christian ceremonies, but in fact they are "a veneer of Catholicism superimposed upon the pagan beliefs" of the Indians' ancestors. Corn is placed upon the altars, and before them rise clouds of incense from the gums of the local conifers to assure that the santos may grant a plentiful harvest. The marimba beats out its monotonous music, reed pipes shrill, and fireworks add noise and gaiety to the celebration.²

Vera Kelsey and Lilly de Jongh Osborne are just as emphatic in describing various festivals as "composites of Christian and pagan ceremonies and celebrations...."³

The previous quotations should suffice to illustrate

-
1. In Guatemala, Past and Present, p. 326.
 2. Ibid., p. 313.
 3. Four Keys to Guatemala, p. 40.

the fact that Indian religious ceremonies are still, to a great degree, pagan. This will be shown in our detailed treatment of present-day religious ceremonies in Guatemala.

1. The Use of the Cross.

The Mayas had the cross long before the coming of the Spaniards. For them, it symbolized the four cardinal points; it was used particularly by the witch doctors. The Quiché tribe had the custom of gathering at the lake shores for their pagan rites on May 3 of each year (according to the Mayan calendar). The Roman missionaries therefore declared May 3 as the Day of the Holy Cross. They taught the Indians to use their Mayan cross in Christian ceremonies performed on that day. In modern times the Indians still use the Mayan cross every May 3 in order to please their gods and the Christian saints; they will, for example, plant crosses in their fields on May 3 in order to assure the growth of the corn.¹

In the Highland regions the Indians will pray to the cross itself as if it possessed some supernatural powers. For instance, while clearing the brush from the fields before planting time, they will stake crosses into the ground and kneel before them, uttering a prayer similar to that which follows:

Oh God, Oh Mother, Oh Father, holy
angel, holy Low Hill.... Hear me, most
Holy Cross, tonight at supper, and be
merciful to thy lamb.... Here, then, is
the miracle of the most Holy Cross which

1. Kelsey and Osborne, op. cit., pp. 39-40.

I came to set up, to care for me so that nothing will befall me. Let me not be bitten by snakes; take them away, hide them, guard them; I am not their murderer.¹

This use of the cross, then, is partly Christian and partly pagan.

2. Sacrifice.

The Pre-Conquest Indians in Central America practiced human sacrifice. That practice ended with the coming of the Spaniards. Sacrifice, as such, has not ceased, however. The modern Indian of Guatemala still sacrifices animals-- particularly the domestic fowl. The gods to whom they sacrifice today are the same as those adored by their ancestors. Malin D'Echevers describes a sacrifice of which he says, "The similarity between the sacrifices of our Indians and those practiced by the ancients in homage to their Olympic gods is striking." He was speaking of a rite that was celebrated every April 25, depicting it as follows:

...the godfather, together with the five "slaves of the Lord" and other prominent Indians..., goes to the source of the "River of the Conquest." There they divide into two groups, one of which stands at a discreet distance, while the other ...stands around the waterfall. The ceremony begins....

In a mixture of Castilian and their

1. Given in Malin D'Echevers, Mah Rap, pp. 174-175. The original reads: "Oh Dios, Oh Madre, Oh Padre, santo angel, santo Cerro Bajo.... Escúchame Santísima Cruz, hoy en la cena, y sé piadosa con tu cordero.... Aquí está

now little used dialect, they pronounce an incomprehensible incantation. Then they make the circle narrower, until their six heads become as one, and all the mouths at once emit praises which are scarcely a murmur. Thereafter they sacrifice two large turkeys, whose blood they carefully collect. The godfather scatters it reverently on the banks of the river, while another throws into the river bed a quantity of chile, thus fulfilling the rite called, "giving the river to drink."

Skillful hands pluck the fowl and draw out the entrails. Those officiating, who crouch about the source of the river, submerge it in the waters, holding it under with their hands, for ten minutes, while they pray without ceasing. Finally they let loose the entrails, and the force of the waterfall, sweeps the offering away and carries it to the God of the Hill, a divinity who, in the mind of the Indians, has the form of a serpent.¹

The Indians follow the example of the ancestors of 400 years ago, still offering sacrifices to the God of the Hill. Sacrificing fowl is generally associated with preventing evil. The Indians of Tezulutlán, Guatemala, always sprinkle chicken blood around the four corners of their homes at planting time; they thus avert misfortune.

pues el milagro de la santísima Cruz que vine a erguir, cuidadora mía para que nada me pase. Que no sea mordido por las culebras; quitálas, escóndelas, guárdelas; no soy matador de ellas."

1. D'Echevers, op. cit., pp. 335-337. The Spanish is: "...el padrino se dirige--en unión de los cinco 'esclavos del Señor' y de otros indios prominentes..., al nacimiento del 'río de la Conquista.' Allí se dividen en dos grupos, uno de los cuales se coloca a distancia discreta, en tanto que el otro... se sitúa en torno de la vertiente. Y da principio la ceremonia.... En una mezcla de castellano y de su ya poco usado dialecto, dicen una relación incomprensible. Luego estrechan el círculo hasta hacer de sus seis cabezas una sola, y todas las bocas a la vez emiten preces que son apenas un murmullo. A continuación sacrifican dos grandes pavos cuya sangre recogen con cuidado. El padrino la esparce reverentemente en

3. Dances.

There are two kinds of indigenous dances: the "ritual" and the "secular." Most Indian dances have lost their pagan meaning, but some are still performed on church holidays. The most popular "secular" dance is that entitled El Son, or El Son San Juanero, or El Son del Borracho. A typical Indian church holiday is that described in Rosendo Santa Cruz's work:

It was the day of Saint Isidor. After the prayer the Indians passed toward the tavern.... There one could hear the mingled sounds of the sad and monotonous drum, the languid shriek of the "oboe" and the stupid shouts of the intoxicated.... In the center of the room the Indians were dancing. The notes of the son were interpreted by their frenzied feet.... They danced and danced and danced.... At times a drunken cry pierced the air; no one took heed, they kept on dancing, dancing, dancing.... They would continue thus until dawn, or until they were conquered by fatigue or until they fell, completely inebriated.¹

las márgenes del nacimiento, en tanto que otro arroja en el cauce una cantidad de 'chilate ayunado,' cumpliendo así con el rito que llaman 'dar de beber al vertiente.' Manos hábiles despojan de sus plumas a las gallináceas y les quitan las entrañas. Los oficiales--quienes rodean el nacimiento, en cuclillas--lo sumergen todo en las aguas, manteniéndolo sujeto con las manos, durante diez minutos, en tanto que oran sin cesar. Finalmente dejan ir las entrañas, y la fuerza del manantial,...arrastra la ofrenda y la lleva al Dios del Cerro, divinidad que en la imaginación de los indios tiene forma de sierpe."

1. In Tierras de lumbre, pp. 51-52, where we read: "Día de San Isidro Labrador. Desde la oración pasan indios endomingados hacia la ermita.... Ahí se mezclaban tonos tristes y monótonos de tamborón, lánguido chillido de chirimillas y gritos monteces de borrachos.... En el centro de la estancia los indios bailaban. Se traducían a sus pies, desesperantes, las notas del son.... Bailaban, bailaban, bailaban.... A veces, grito aguardentoso cortaba el aire; nadie

The corrupt religious state of the Indian is evident from the previous description of a supposedly Christian festival. Immediately after the prayers associated with the day, however, the Indians continue their worship by dancing a Pre-Conquest dance and consuming large quantities of alcohol.

The most popular religious dance of Mayan ancestry may be that called the Dance of the Jesters, which is descended from the old fertility rites. Spanish priests have modified the dance somewhat, but some suggestion of the old significance remains.¹ Other dances still persisting today but more Hispanized are those mentioned on pages 25 and 26 above.

4. Paganized Christian Ceremonies.

a) Fiesta de Santo Tomás.

Erna Fergusson devotes an entire chapter to the discussion of this pagan festival with a Christian name. By ten o'clock in the morning, the taverns are filled with drinkers. Indians from the surrounding areas of Chichicastenango have come to town to venerate Saint Thomas. On one side of the steps leading up to the church of Santo Tomás one sees Indian devotees burning the ancient copal pom to the God of the

hacia caso, todos seguían bailando, bailando, bailando.... Así continuarían hasta que los sorprendiera la serenata de luz de la madrugada, los venciera el cansancio o quedarán de bruces, impotentes, derrotados por la embriaguez."

1. Kelsey and Osborne, op. cit., p. 106.

Spaniards. On the other side they burn incense to the Mayan gods. A prominent feature of this church festival is the performance of several ancient Mayan dances, such as the son and the palo volador. The fireworks that climax the events of the day symbolize the soul going up to the sun.¹

b) Fiesta de la Cruz.

This festival, referred to previously, includes pilgrimages, dances, music, water-sports, and a fair. The Indians flock to town to say their prayers and to buy cajetas de Amatitlán (boxes filled with sweets of the season). They return home to plant crosses in the fields with the assurance that both the Christian gods and their own gods are ready to grant them good crops.²

c) Holy Week Festivals

In the capital and in the more Hispanized areas of Guatemala, Holy Week is celebrated with much pomp and pageantry; pagan elements are at a minimum. In the more remote sections, however, Kelsey and Osborne's characterization of Holy Week presents a rather sad picture:

...the festival is a composite of Christian and pagan ceremonies and celebrations, all based on the same general idea but no two alike.

Coming as it does in March or April, Holy Week coincides in time with the fertility rites held anciently before the gods

1. Cf. Fergusson, op. cit., pp. 37-47, and Kelsey and Osborne, op. cit., pp. 38-39.

2. Kelsey and Osborne, op. cit., pp. 39-40.

to win good crops and good rains. Because a period of abstinence from women, meat, anger and intemperance was required then, too, Lent is taken with doubled seriousness.

Anciently, too, some tribes observed the extra five-day period that terminates the calendar of 360 days as a ritual period and survivals of those elaborate rites have become identified with Holy Week....

In villages where the rites of Holy Week and pagan ceremonies are observed, shamans or witch doctors preside over all festivities. And in villages and on fincas where no Christian priest resides permanently, the festivities are in charge of chosen men who either through design or ignorance incorporate into the program of processions and services features that have no origin in Christianity.

The long period of preparation comes to a head in the Semana de Dolores (Week of Repentance), the week preceding Holy Week.... New costumes are made for the images that in many cases symbolize both a Christian saint and some manifestation of a pagan god....

During this week of repentance, too, many villages erect arches of flowers, fruit and vegetables. Stuffed bodies of squirrels, raccoons, rabbits and other small animals of tribal significance are featured on them and often a live animal is used.

In Sololá, the flower known as Pie de Gallo (Cock's Foot) decorates the bower in which the Virgen de Dolores is carried in procession on Good Friday. This is the flower used traditionally on the bower of the pagan gods before whom the fertility rites were performed. Because of its crab-like shape, the flower symbolizes the Great Crab with glowing eyes of eke (a parasite of the forests) that once lured the gods of the Quiché through a saga of adventures before it was overcome and thrown into the waters of Lake Atitlán.

Considering the poverty and lack of resources of the majority of the villages, the completeness and variety of their Holy Week program are remarkable. Wednesday is the day of the Easter Market when not only supplies of food and flowers for the week must be purchased but also bread which is eaten by the Indians at no other time.

Thursday and Friday are the important ceremonial days; Saturday is a time of buffoonery and horse-play. By Easter Sunday, when the Christian world is churchward bound, most of the Indians are in their milpas planting corn.

Ceremonial burlesque goes hand in hand with the most solemn dignity. In Chiantla, where all the roles of the Christian pageant except those of Mary, Mary Magdalene and St. John are taken by men, the apostles escape from the Good Friday procession to the Crucifixion and hide in the ravines. This affords the men and boys, dressed in purple robes and peaked headdresses, opportunity for a hunt; after strenuous hours all the apostles are dragged back to the procession. Meantime Christ is tied to a post in front of the church and the figure of St. John is rushed to tell Mary what has happened.

In villages like Santiago Atitlán, it is believed that Mary and John enjoyed a passionate interlude on the night before the Crucifixion. Therefore they are locked in separate cells in the village jail during Thursday night and released in the morning when some official or cofradía pays their fine.

The Quiché, Cakchiqueles and Tzutuhiles add another strange character to the cast of Holy Week. This is a scarecrow called Maximón (The Great Lord Who Is Bound). He is variously identified as Judas, Alvarado, sometimes as the owner of the finca; and in most villages he is an object of ridicule. In Atitlán he is worshipped seriously, and prayers, food, candles and incense are offered him. In certain villages the Maximón effigy is set up in a cofradía throughout Lent. Once he was observed sitting--cigar in mouth--behind a table on which were spread a deck of cards, a bottle and glass.

Most villages pretend at least that the scarecrow dressed in village cast-off clothing (or European dress if at all possible) is Judas. Throughout Holy Week he is mocked and jeered, and on Saturday his trial and death offer outlet in comic relief to the solemn and sorrowful services of Thursday and Friday. Haled before the mob, Judas

is accused and condemned, and his last will, a collection of crude satires and lewd jokes, is read aloud to raucous applause. Then, at the heels of a mule, he is dragged about the streets, stoned, beaten, cursed, and finally burned.¹

The appearance of non-Christian elements in Holy Week celebrations is not peculiar to Guatemala; thus one must remain objective in judging facts such as those presented in the previous paragraphs. Nevertheless, one would expect four centuries of Catholic domination to have left the Guatemalan people with a clearer picture of the meaning and purpose of Lent. If this major season of the Church year is burlesqued to such a great degree, one doubts the Christianity of Catholicism in Guatemala.

d) Christmas Processions.

The pro-Catholic writer Erna Fergusson speaks of the "very amusing burlesque" of the Christmas Eve procession in cities like Antigua. A parade in honor of the Virgin winds through the streets on the evening of December 24; it consists of floats that

...have little meaning for an outsider, but townsfolk laugh at them with unrestrained glee, delighted to recognize their fellow citizens in caricature. For many generations a society of artisans and servants have amused themselves by burlesquing the town's aristocrats, making bold but always good-humored fun. Members of the great

1. Ibid., pp. 40-43. Cf. also Fergusson, op. cit., pp. 241-254.

families like it; they even lend their typical hats or canes and are entertained much as anybody.¹

The processions usually dramatize the search of Joseph and Mary for a lodging in Bethlehem. The manner in which they are carried on sometimes becomes sacriligious. The Guatemalan Indian is no judge of such matters, however. For him religion consists largely in processions, prayers, and the performance of certain religious duties.

5. Marriage Customs and Ceremonies.

The cross between the new and the old culture is very evident in the home. Newborn children are usually brought to the Catholic Church for baptism. The Indians pay the fee either with money or with eggs, honey, and other products. Jones states, however, that

Marriage as a rule is not a Christian sacrament and Indian burials are almost never conducted under Christian rites. Except in formal baptism Christianity touches the Indian most closely not in the life cycle but in the religious calendar and the santos.

A large and apparently increasing number of Indians neither demand the formal marriage ceremony by the Catholic priest nor comply with the law on civil marriage....

Formal marriage by Indian custom supplements where it does not replace the Catholic ceremony and is preceded and accompanied by a definite ritual followed by the families involved.²

Thus marriage is not significant in the religious life

1. Fergusson, op. cit., p. 269.

2. Jones, op. cit., p. 321.

of the Indian except when that religious life is concerned with the remnants of the Old Mayan customs. This is evident, for example, when the father of a Cuchumatan Mountain lad plans to pick a bride for his son. He does not then seek the council of a priest. He goes to the village witch doctor, who will select the correct bride by a series of calculations. Thereafter, the witch doctor takes a clay dish in which copal is burning, enters the house of the potential bride, and solemnly breaks an egg over the incense he is carrying. He raises his voice in prayer and states the purpose of his coming. The father of the girl is offered a cup of "fire-water;" if it is accepted, it signifies consent to the matrimony. The boy's father agrees upon a price to pay for the bride: it may be as much as \$25.00 plus five sheep, a pig, several turkeys, 500 pounds of corn, and other food. But when the exchange has finally been made, the elders of the village sacrifice a domestic fowl in gratitude to the gods.¹

If the girl's hand has been sought earlier by another, the witch doctor finds it necessary to perform special acts of magic in order that the dismissed suitor will not bewitch the marriage.²

In some areas the parents first seek contact with their ancestors before agreeing upon a match. For this they must wait for some evening when the souls of the ancestors are

1. Kelsey and Osborne, op. cit., pp. 26-30.

2. Fergusson, op. cit., p. 111.

abroad. Those souls then reveal their desires to the various parties concerned.¹

It appears that less and less importance is attached to marriage by the Roman clergy. This is part of the trend away from Catholicism in many Indian areas, as will be demonstrated later. Kelsey and Osborne write, "Most Indian couples today either marry without benefit of clergy or through a ceremony presided over by a village elder or witch doctor."²

B. THEIR INWARD MANIFESTATION IN THE TRADITIONS AND BELIEFS OF TODAY.

1. Nahualism.

In the Highland regions of Guatemala, the belief in Nahualism appears to be as it was before the Conquest. Today, as in those times, if a man's nahual is hit on the head, that man has a headache. If an elderly person has lost his appetite, his buzzard-nahual cannot eat either.

Perhaps contemporary nahualism can best be illustrated by telling the story of "El Brujo de Chitzajay."³ This very recent tradition relates the experiences of a prospector for mercury, who at first declined to believe in witch doctors or in nahualism, but finally was convinced of their authenticity. The story is as follows:

1. Ibid., p. 110.

2. Op. cit., p. 29.

3. In Samayoa, Cuatro suertes, pp. 57-90.

The narrator leaves his home town with a guide, in search of the owner of a mercury mine. The guide informs him that the mine belongs to a fearful witch doctor who already knows that the two are seeking him. The narrator considers his guide's fears quite absurd, thinking that no one could have such clairvoyant knowledge. As the two approach the brujo's (witch doctor's) property, the guide insists upon returning home. His reason is that the brujo has a very strong nahual. Since a man's strength must be judged in accordance with that of his nahual, hardly anyone would be strong enough to withstand the brujo de Chitzajay.

A lion suddenly appears, which the guide immediately identifies with the brujo: "It is he...in the form of an animal...."¹ With difficulty the narrator persuades the guide to continue with him. They reach the home of the brujo, who invites them to spend the night there and to discuss their business on the following day. Several times during the night, the guide is attacked by an invisible being which leaves as its marks, wounds that could have been inflicted only by a lion. The narrator, on one occasion edging over to the brujo's quarters, sees him praying before the statue of a Mayan god. The witch doctor wants his nahual to triumph over that of the guide, and therefore prays:

I want to take possession of a soul,
oh gods of the earth, oh mothers of the
earth, right now, and with your permission.

1. Ibid., p. 74. ("Es él...en forma de animal....").

I need the soul of that man. Here is my copal pom. Fathers of witchcraft, bring me the soul of that bad man of my race. Great Man and Great Woman of all creation, gods of all witchcraft and of the south-east wind, spirits of magic, hear my prayer. Amen.¹

The brujo disappears for the following day. That night, similar events occur. On the third day, the narrator sees a lion outside attacking a black fox. In the moment that the fox's head is bitten, the narrator hears his guide shriek. Rushing to his side, he sees blood streaming from the guide's head. With his 38 Special revolver, the narrator wounds the lion in the shoulders; the latter then escapes into the mountains. After the narrator and his guide return to the nearby village, they learn that the brujo was found dead--with the bullet of a 38 Special in his shoulders. The once-skeptical narrator is now a firm believer in nahualism.

Stories of this nature are accepted as factual by many highland Indians, for they consider nahualism an important feature of their life.

The concept of nahualism is necessarily based upon the belief that animals have a soul and other human characteristics. That belief can be illustrated from another tradition of recent origin:

1. Ibid., p. 83. The Spanish reads: "Quiero apoderarme de una alma, dioses de la tierra, Madres de la tierra, ahora mismo y con el permiso de ustedes. Necesito el alma de ese hombre. Aquí está mi copal pom. Padres del encantamiento, traedme esa alma del mal hombre de mi raza. Gran Hombre y Gran mujer de todo lo creado, dioses de todo encantamiento y del viento sudeste. Espíritus mágicos. Amén."

Two incredulous guatemaltecos, don Chus and Toribio, would not agree with a third, Pedro, that animals--especially oxen--have souls and other human characteristics, such as speech. Suddenly a thunderstorm arose, and there appeared before the three the silhouette of an ox. Tears fell from the silhouette's eyes, as he related man's cruel treatment of him:

...the ox's tears were mingled with the rain that fell from the sky. The mule-drivers kept silent. Don Chus and Toribio felt ashamed of their incredulity. On the following day, as they began their journey, they found the biggest and strongest of the oxen dead.... The ox had spoken in behalf of his entire race--in a lament that man heard to no avail.¹

It appears that Roman Catholicism in Guatemala has not yet succeeded in stamping out the pagan beliefs in nahualism and animal souls.

2. Witchcraft.

Frequent reference has already been made to the presence of the belief in witchcraft. Such a belief, of course, is not peculiar to Guatemala; nevertheless, it existed in that country long before the coming of the Spaniards and is among the pagan elements of Indian religion that persist to the present day. The people of Guatemala have been unable to

1. J. Fernando Juárez y Aragón, Cuentos del lar, p. 62. The original is: "Lloró el buey y su llanto se confundió con el agua que del cielo caía. Los arrieros guardaron silencio. Don Chus y Toribio sintieron vergüenza de su incredulidad. Al día siguiente al emprender la jornada, junto a la cerca del corral, un buey, el más grande y robusto, amaneció muerto. Dijeron los mozos, y todos lo creyeron, que el alma del buey habló por su estirpe en una queja dolorosa, lamento que el hombre en balde escuchó."

find Catholic spiritual guidance to satisfy their needs.

For that reason,

Nobody would dream of undertaking anything without consulting the shaman. He lays out his red beans from the pito tree, burns a bit of copal, says a prayer, and pronounces the day lucky or not.¹

The witch doctor, or shaman, is sometimes known by various other names, such as brujo, curandero, and adivino. The anthropologist Schultze Jena attempts to make a distinction between these various terms.² In general, however, they are used so loosely that they might all be translated with the same term--witch doctor.

One of the most important functions of the witch doctor is to heal sicknesses. Each village has its curandero, whose herbs and incantations are credited with many cures. In some cases, of course, the remedies of the curandero will be of no avail. The sufferer will then send some relative on a pilgrimage to the Catholic statue of el Señor de Esquipulas. The pilgrim asks the statue to do a miracle: namely, either to release the sufferer from his illness (by death), or to cure him. The miracle is always accomplished.³

Samayoa gives us a prayer which is typical of curanderos in their attempts to cure one who is ill:

Oh Jesus, Jesus, in the name of God and
with your permission and with that of all
your heavenly court, give me the power to

1. Fergusson, op. cit., p. 108.

2. Cf. La vida y las creencias de los indígenas quichés de Guatemala, pp. 32-72.

3. Cf. an illustration of this in Juárez y Aragón, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

heal. If this is the evil will of a brujo, if this is the bad intention of a wizard, I shall frighten away the fires that the sick one has in his abdomen and in his back. With your permission, oh lord saint of this house. With the permission of the gods of this place, with the permission of the Great Woman of Chinautla, may this sickness withdraw and the sick one be healed. Amen.¹

The brujo is usually thought of as being a more evil type of witch doctor than the curandero. Brujos can operate either in spirit form (after their death) or in bodily form (while alive).

Perhaps the most famous witch of recent times is la Tatuana. Imprisoned some years ago for her witchcraft, she simply painted a ship on the wall, stepped in, and sailed away. To this day, particularly the children must watch that they are not carried off and eaten by her.²

While la Tatuana and other dealers in the occult can now work only in spirit form, the great majority of brujos in Guatemala are living human beings. The story of el brujo de Chitzajay, considered previously, presents an exaggerated picture of the modern brujo. In addition to 1)healing diseases with medicinal plants and incantations, and 2)causing

1. In Cuatro suertes, p. 46 ("Jesús, Jesús, en el nombre de Dios y con tu permiso y el de toda tu corte celestial. Dame el poder de dar la salud. Si es la mala voluntad de un brujo, si es la mala intención de un hechicero, voy a ojear los fuegos que tiene el enfermo en la cintura y en la espalda. Con tu permiso, señor santo de la casa. Con el permiso de los señores del lugar; con el de la gran mujer de Chinautla, que se aleje la enfermedad y sane el enfermo. Amen.")

2. D'Echevers, op. cit., p. 99.

curse to fall on men and animals, they also 3) foretell the future and 4) act as intermediaries between god and man-- sometimes being the mouthpiece through which the words of the god pass to their client.¹ Some witch doctors can perform only one of these functions; many, however, can perform all of them.

The witch doctors are usually self-appointed and possess a prominent physical deformity. They are probably feared more than they are loved.² Frazer's discussion of witch doctors in general could be applied to the brujos of Guatemala; for witchcraft seems to follow similar lines everywhere.³ The fact that people throughout Guatemala have more use for a witch doctor than for a priest indicates the failure of Roman Catholicism to plant a true Christianity in that country.

3. Pagan gods.

In sketching the character of a typical Kecchi Indian,⁴ Manuel Chavarria Flores concludes: "...the trilogy that rules his simple life is: Work, Superstition and Gods in abundance."⁵ Carlos Wyld Ospina, presenting the Indian philosophy of life,⁶ shows how the saints and the God brought by the

1. Cf. Kelsey and Osborne, op. cit., pp. 22-24.

2. Cf. D'Echevers, op. cit., p. 200.

3. Cf. Witchcraft in the index of Frazer, op. cit. for a guide to the numerous pages on which the subject is discussed.

4. Tezulutlán, pp. 35-39.

5. Ibid., p. 39. ("...la tercera que norma su vida simple, es: Trabajo, Superstición y Dioses en abundancia.")

6. In La tierra de las nahuyacas, ch. 4, pp. 27-32.

Spaniards have now been identified with the Indians' own gods. According to Chavarria, many Indians today consider the Mayan gods as the original, the autochthonous, and therefore the legitimate gods of Guatemala. The Spanish gods, once intruders, have now been accepted as another version of the official Guatemalan gods. The Spanish priest is another aspect of the more acceptable witch doctor. The cathedrals are a form of the Old Mayan temples; and the modern cathedrals are still the home of many Indian gods. The statues of saints are but the transfigured deities of the Pre-Conquest natives. As Chavarria explains it,

The new forms of the Christian mythology did not interrupt the perpetual stream of ancient formulas, nor did the former alter the essence of the latter.¹

Thus the worship of many a Highland Indian today consists in

...offering the first fruits of the earth to Tzuúl-Takká; respecting Mam; keeping the good will of the intermediary powers; adoring God, the High Spirit; praying to the idols, and sanctifying, together with his religious brotherhood, the holy book of the Roman Catholics, drinking el batido (Indian drink of religious meaning made from crushed cacao, sugar, and alcohol).²

On another page, Wyld expands upon the average Indian's type of worship, and the gods worshipped:

1. Op. cit., p. 31 ("Las nuevas formas de la mitología cristiana no interrumpían la perpetuidad de las fórmulas antiguas ni alteraban su esencia.").

2. Wyld., op. cit., p. 32 ("...ofrendar las primicias terrestres a Tzuúl-Takká; respetar al Mam; mantener propicias a las potencias intermedias; adorar a Dios, Espíritu Sumo; rogar a los iconos, y santificar, con su cofradía, las fiestas del santoral católico romano, bebiendo el batido.").

To the Solar Divinity he owed love above all else. To the gods, worship. He made no distinction between good and evil gods, for all were superior to man, and therefore deserved tribute. The offerings to Tzuúl-Takká (this means hill-plain) were cheerful and bedecked with flowers. Tzuúl-Takká, Lord of the Valleys and Hills, is a propitious and young god, the very essence of fertility. His rule is always one of positive Good. But on the last five days of the solar cycle, when the year is old and unfruitful, a great clanking noise comes from the hill-dwelling of Mam, the malicious spirit, and this adverse god tries to tear off the surface of the earth and rise to the top. He only succeeds in showing his wrinkled face....¹

These various gods are, in the mind of the descendant of the Mayas, identical to the statues which he sees in the churches.²

A salient feature of Mayan belief is the notion that the gods own everything. Thus before the Highland Indian hunts, he prays to the lord of the hill chosen for the hunt and asks forgiveness for taking an animal from him. He may also burn candles in his (the god's) honor. After the animal has been killed, the Indian goes before the image of a god and offers to it the blood-stained bullet with which he killed the animal. He then burns incense to the

1. Ibid., p. 28 ("A la Divinidad Solar le debía amor sobre todas las cosas. A los dioses, culto. No hacía diferencia entre los buenos y los malos dioses: todos eran espíritus superiores a su humanidad y cobraban tributo. Ciertamente que las ofrendas gratas al Tzuúl-Takká eran alegres y floridas. Tzuúl-Takká, Señor de Valles y Cerros, era un dios propicio y joven, formado con la esencia misma de la fecundidad. Reinaba siempre, positivo como el Bien. Pero en los últimos cinco días del ciclo solar, cuando el Año estaba ya viejo e infecundo, retumbaba el cerro merada de Mam, el espíritu enredador, y este dios adverso trataba de romper la corteza terrestre y surgir a la superficie. Solo conseguía asomar la faz arrugada....").

2. Ibid., p. 14.

god and goes home, satisfied that all is well. Before the Highland Indian cuts down brush to make room for planting, he again asks the forgiveness of the gods for destroying their property,¹ for the gods only lend the earth to man.²

Chavarría, whose work has been mentioned previously, stresses the pantheistic aspects of modern Guatemalan religion, emphasizing the identification of mountains with gods. In this respect he draws a parallel between the modern Kecchí and the ancient Greek:

The governing god, who in the divine genealogy of Greece is Jupiter the omnipotent, here is the Mountain Xucaneb..., which corresponds to Mount Olympus. Neptune and Pluto, the two powerful brothers with whom Zeus shares his reign, (in Guatemala) are Mount Cojaj...and Mount Kan Chamá or the yellow Tzuúl-Takká of Chamá. Xan Itzam...is the wife of Xucaneb--the mythological Juno, who demands an account of her husband's frequent escapades. The gods have wives, children, sons-in-law, and a progeny like that of any human being.³

To these pantheistic deities the modern Kecchí brings a triple offering:

...in his hands, the incense which bears

1. Ibid., p. 44.

2. Ibid., p. 79.

3. Op. cit., p. 30 ("El Dios gobernador, Júpiter omnipotente en la genealogía divina de la Grecia, es aquí el Cerro Xucaneb, que recorta su cono elevado y majestuoso en el Olimpo sagrado de la Naturaleza. Neptuno y Plutón, los dos hermanos poderosos con quienes Zeus comparte su gobierno, son el Cerro Cojaj,...y el Kan Chamá, 'el Tzuúl-Takká amarillo de Chamá.' Xan Itzam...es la esposa de Xucaneb--Juno mitológica--, exigidora de sus frecuentes escapatorias. Los dioses poseen esposas, hijos, yernos, y una progénie como podría engendrarla cualquier humano.").

up the smoke of his fervent plea; in his mouth, the tremulous anxiety of his petition; in his heart, the imperishable flower of faith.¹

Like many other writers on Guatemalan religion, Chavarria insists that

Polytheism and pantheism make up the dual spirit of the Kecchi religion. The Spanish conquerers amalgamated with them Christianity, to make the theogony more complex.²

D'Echevers, finally, has attempted to do much the same as Wyld and Chavarria in describing contemporary Indians worshipping Pre-Conquest gods. He points out that for the Indians of Alta Verapaz, Christ is Loc Lac Tzul Tacá (the fearful Mayan god of the low mountains), who has desired to show himself in the likeness of the Nazarene.³ With some hesitation, believes Schultze Jena, has the Highland Indian raised the Christian God and the Catholic saints to the level of the Mayan gods.⁴

4. General Superstitions.

a) Evil omens.

Evil omens, naturally, are not peculiar to Guatemala.

1. Ibid., p. 28 ("...en las manos, el pom que lleva el humo de la plegaria fervorosa; en la boca, el ansia trémula del pedimento; en el corazón, la flor inmarcesible de la fe.").

2. Ibid., p. 33 ("Polyteísmo y Panteísmo es el dual espíritu de la religión kecchi. Los dominadores españoles tuvieron a bien amalgamarle otro ismo: Cristianismo, para complejar más su teogonía.").

3. D'Echevers, op. cit., p. 176.

4. Op. cit., p. 66. He states, for example, "Con esta ligera duda acerca de la legitimidad que le cabe al santo para estar con estas deidades, lo eleva al nivel de los antiguos dioses."

But they are indigenous and as such are pagan. One could make a lengthy list of contemporary evil omens that have their source in the Old Mayan beliefs; but the following are presented as typical.

Before going out on a hunt, the Indians must be careful not to demonstrate too much of a spirit of levity; for this would anger the gods and destroy the success of the hunt.¹ Letting a weasel cross one's path is a sure sign of coming misfortune.² To behold a snake slinking across one's path or to hear a pich (Guatemalan bird) scream may mean the loss of the finca.³ Perhaps the most feared of omens is to hear the howling of dogs and the cackling of chickens; for when the two occur simultaneously, death is sure to come.⁴

b) Fate.

"There is something that obliges one to believe in the intervention of fate" is a statement quite typical of Guatemalan Indian thought.⁵ The art and literature of the Mayas reflects a pessimistic belief in fate--a belief that controls the lives of many modern natives and dampens any motivation toward creative activity. Naturally, that belief is common in many other areas of the world. But it is hardly

1. Taken from a statement in Francisco Méndez and Antonio Morales Nadler's Romances de tierra verde, p. 43.

2. Wyld, op. cit., p. 42.

3. Ibid., pp. 73-74.

4. Juárez y Aragón, op. cit., p. 49.

5. D'Echevers, op. cit., p. 313.

Christian; and its prominence in Guatemala may be an indication of the fact that the Roman Church has been unable to present the Indians with a truly positive view toward life. Flavio Herrera has written an entire book upon the importance of the belief in fate as it motivates the daily life of many a guatemalteco.¹

c) Abstinence.

Frazer's emphasis upon the association which man often makes between abstaining from sex and pleasing God or the gods is particularly applicable to Guatemala.² Chavarría informs us that some Highland Indians consider it essential to cohabit with their wives before planting in order to assure successful growth of the crop.³ But Wyld points out that the typical Kechí Indian would reason in the opposite direction.⁴ All Indians, it seems, will abstain from sex relations before going out to hunt.⁵ In fact, some believe even a woman's touch is unclean and that she must be kept away from any weapons used in the hunt.⁶ Any thoughts of sex seem to drive away the noble spirits.⁷

d) Good and bad days.

Schultze Jena has written up, in popular form, the sig-

-
1. The work is entitled Poniente de sirenas.
 2. Cf. op. cit., pp. 136, 138.
 3. Op. cit., pp. 35-36.
 4. Op. cit., p. 70.
 5. Wyld, op. cit., p. 36.
 6. Ibid., p. 25.
 7. Ibid., p. 25.

nificance of all the twenty days of the Mayan calendar. For instance, the first is bad, the second good, the third good, the fourth bad, the fifth very bad, the sixth good, etc.¹ It is up to the brujo to determine for the average Indian of today just which days are "lucky" for corn planting, naming the baby, and the like. The knowledge which he imparts is kept secret from those who will not pay the required fee for it.² To this day, guatemaltecos dutifully pay the price.

To the general superstitions given here, one could add many more. But entire books have been written on the general subject of Guatemalan superstitions, and the interested reader is referred to them.³ The existence of these countless superstitions everywhere is evidence of the fact that Roman Catholicism in Guatemala has failed to inculcate into the Indians the true meaning and power of Christianity.

1. Cf. op. cit., pp. 33ff.

2. Fergusson, op. cit., p. 265.

3. E. g., Soler Lopez, Secretos de la raza.

CONCLUSION

The material presented in the previous pages may lead some to agree with W. F. Jordan, Former Secretary of the American Bible Society in Latin America, when he asserts that Guatemalan (and other) Indians are in a worse state today--both spiritually and physically--than they were before the Conquest. "The Church supplies the festivals and the Government the rum which combine to work the ruin of the Indian," he states.¹ The pessimism, immorality, confusion, and poverty that marks the hapless Guatemalan Highlander of today is a sad commentary upon the work of Roman Catholicism in Central America. Worse than that, Christianity has meant for him merely adding a few more gods to his already crowded pantheon.

On the steps of the Church of Santo Tomás in Chichicastenango, there now stands an altar dedicated to the gods of fertility, corn, and rain. The ancient Mayan incense, copal pom, continues to fog the air in front of the cathedral as it bears pagan prayers upward. But in order not to slight the Christian gods--since they may exist--, the Indian enters the Roman Church and offers prayers to the statues he sees before him.

For the Guatemalan Indian, the cross signifies something besides Christ's vicarious atonement. Its four ends point to the four corners of the earth, where four gods stand to hold up the sky. The frequent earthquakes of Guatemala

1. Indian America, p. 20.

excite the Indian to hope that the gods' knees may be strong enough to keep the sky from crumbling. The cross is also the favorite implement for sorcery. The brujos can get results with it while the Roman priests cannot; thus the people prefer the witch doctors.

The welfare of one's nahual is still essential to health and happiness. When a child is ill, the Indian does not ask the priest for prayers in its behalf. He goes to the sorcerer--who may discover the baby's nahual caught or injured somewhere. Once the animal is freed or cured, the baby is likewise cured.

Offerings to gods or statues are still made. The whisky which a devotee brings to the brujo is drunk by the latter in order that the god to whom it is offered may enjoy it. Or meat may be brought for sacrifice to a god; the brujo, of course, will finally eat it.

In short, Catholic missionaries and priests have merely tried to "pour fresh water" into a cistern full of bad water. As a result, the fresh water has only become putrid. And Chester Lloyd Jones is no doubt correct in saying that Guatemalan religion has been "undergoing modifications towards non-Christian standards."¹

At best, religion in Guatemala today represents a cross between the pagan and the "Christian," between the indigenous

1. Op. cit., p. 343.

and the non-indigenous. Superstition, ignorance, and immorality exist within the shadow of the Church. The morals and morale of the Indian are at a very low ebb. Pagan customs, rites, and ceremonies have been permitted, sanctioned, or even encouraged by the Roman Catholic Church. It would be difficult to say how many--or how few--Indians actually know the way of salvation.

The solution to the religious problem of Guatemala lies in sending consecrated men to that country to spread the Gospel everywhere. During a Protestant conference in Antigua, Guatemala, some years ago, "A Guatemalan arose to say that he had never seen anything like it; he marveled to see what the gospel had done for a race which their conquerors had always considered as beasts."¹ After an indigenous evangelical church has been firmly established, it would be well to send educators and health experts to the people. If they knew that it was not necessary to sacrifice an expensive ox to insure good crops, if they were convinced that fires are prevented not by pouring libations to the fire god but by building fire breaks, if they understood that malaria is not the result of witchcraft but of a mosquito, then the present paganism so prominent in Guatemalan Catholicism could be dealt a death blow.

1. Jordan, op. cit., p. 5.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Blom, Frans, La vida de los mayas, Mexico City, Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1944.
- Brinton, Daniel C., Myths of the New World, Philadelphia, 1896.
- Caso, Alphonso, La religión de los aztecas, Mexico City, Secr. de Ed. Pub., 1945.
- Chavarría Flores, Manuel, Tezulutlán, Guatemala City, Tipografía Nacional, 1936.
- D'Echevers, Malín, Mah Rap, Guatemala City, Tipografía Nacional, 1946.
- Díaz Vasconcelos, Luis Antonio, Apuntes para la historia de la literatura guatemalteca, Guatemala City, Tipografía Nacional, 1942.
- Fergusson, Erna, Guatemala, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1937.
- Frazer, James George, The Golden Bough, abridged edition, New York, MacMillan, 1945.
- Frazer, James George, The Belief in Immortality and the Worship of the Dead, London, 1922.
- García A., J. Luis, Leyendas Indígenas de Guatemala, Guatemala City, Editorial "Oriental", 1942.
- Goubaud, Antonio, The Guajxaquip Bats--an Indian Ceremony of Guatemala, Guatemala City, Tipografía Nacional, 1937.
- Grubb, Kenneth G., Religion in Central America, London, World Dominion Press, 1937.
- Herrera, Flavio, Poniente de sirenas, Guatemala City, Tipografía Nacional, 1937.
- Jones, Chester Lloyd, Guatemala, Past and Present, Minneapolis, U. of Minn. Press, 1940.
- Jordan, W. F., Glimpses of Indian America, New York, Fleming H. Revell, 1923.
- Juárez y Aragón, J. Fernando, Cuentos del lar, Guatemala City, Unión Tipográfica, 1941.
- Kelsey, Vera, and Osborne, Lilly de Jongh, Four Keys to Guatemala, New York, Funk and Wagnalls, 1946.
- Mapes, Erwin K., and López-Morillas, Juan, Y va de cuento, New York, Ginn and Co., 1943.
- Marroquín Rojas, C., En el corazón de la montaña, Guatemala City, Tipografía Sánchez y de Guise, 1930.
- Méndez, Francisco, and Morales Nadler, Antonio, Romances de tierra verde, Guatemala City, Tipografía "América," 1938.
- Morescier, Alfredo, El último maya, Guatemala City, Editorial "San Antonio," 1936.
- Morley, Samuel G., Guía a las ruinas de Quiriguá, Trans. Adrián Recinos, Washington, Carnegie Institute, 1936

- Munro, Dana G., The Latin American Republics, New York, D. Appleton-Century, 1942.
- Peake, Harold, The Flood: New Light on an Old Story, New York, 1930.
- Picón-Salas, Mariano, De la Conquista a la Independencia, Mexico City, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1944.
- Recinos, Adrián, Popul Vuh, Mexico City, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1947.
- Reinhold, Meyer, Greek and Roman Classics, New York, Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1947.
- Rodas, Flavio N., Simbolismos Maya-Quichés de Guatemala, Guatemala City, Tipografía Nacional, 1938.
- Samayoa Chinchilla, Carlos, Cuatro suertes, Guatemala City, Tipografía Nacional, 1936.
- Samayoa Chinchilla, Madre milpa, Guatemala City, Tipografía Nacional, 1934.
- Réville, Albert, The Native Religions of Mexico and Peru, 1896.
- Santa Cruz, Rosendo, Tierras de lumbre, Guatemala, Talleres Tipográficos San Antonio, 1938.
- Schmidt, Wilhelm, High-Gods in North America, Oxford, Oxford U. Press., 1933.
- Schmidt, Wilhelm, Origin and Growth of Religion, Philadelphia, 1935.
- Schmidt, Wilhelm, Ursprung der Gottesidee, Muenster, 1934.
- Schultze Jena, Leonhard, La vida y las creencias de los indígenas quichés de Guatemala, Guatemala City, Tipografía Nacional, 1947.
- Spain, Mildred W., And in Samaria, Dallas, Central American Mission, 1940.
- Villacorta C., J. Antonio, Estudios sobre lingüística guatemalteca, Guatemala, Tipografía Nacional, 1938.
- Webster, Hutton, History of Latin America, third edition, Boston, D. C. Heath, 1941.
- Wyld Ospina, Carlos, La tierra de las nahuyacas, Guatemala City, Tipografía Nacional, 1933.
- Zwemer, Samuel M., The Origin of Religion, Nashville, Cokesbury Press, 1935.