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THE BEAUTY WALK

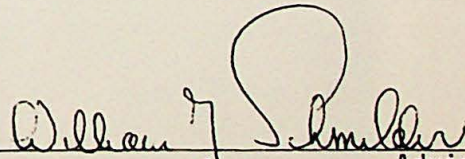
A Systematics Compend of
Navajo Theology

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

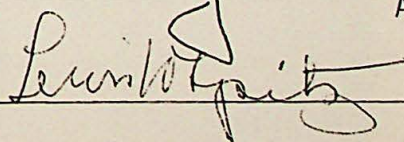
by

Walter W. Snyder

April 1979



Advisor



Reader

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CHAPTER I

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND AN ANIMISTIC RELIGION

One of the least successful endeavors of the Christian Church in the Western Hemisphere, though one of the oldest ones, has been the Christianizing of the Native American, the American Indian. This is especially true among western Indian groups, including the Navajo, the people whose religion is the subject of this study. Much has been written on the subject, especially in recent years, by ethnographers, sociologists and psychologists. The Church itself has finally become involved in the attempt to analyze the situation.

Many reasons have been set forward. Among these are: lack of understanding of another culture; failure to respect a different culture; paternalism; and the Church functioning as a civilizing agent for the government. But, according to the opinion and understanding of this writer, the most obvious one of all has been overlooked: almost no comprehension of the native religious beliefs of these people.

All societies have their cultural values determined in part by either their religious values or their lack of them. More advanced societies are also affected to a greater degree by other influences. The culture of a more primitive society is developed and affected almost exclusively by its religion. The latter is still true of many of the American Indians of the Twentieth Century, including the Navajo.

Many of the Navajo themselves fail to recognize this because of the effects of acculturation. The influences of a dominant anglo society with its emphasis upon materialism have had their impact. Especially younger Navajo people know that certain things are done or not done in their society as a matter of growing up with these values, but they are ignorant of the religious principles which dictated these values.

Many secular writers of differing disciplines have endeavored to explain religious values from the point of view of a particular secular discipline. They have frequently given gratuitous advice to the Church how to meet needs and establish guidelines. While many of the writers have been quite sincere, and some of the advice has been helpful to a degree, they have all fallen short for the Church. The Church must meet these problems and deal with them from within the understanding of its own discipline; theology.

Because this writer failed to find anything authoritative on Navajo religion produced by a theologian, he has attempted this study. It was decided that Navajo theology should be approached from the standpoint of systematic theology, especially within the area of dogmatics. Some years ago the writer produced material on the peyote cult among the American Indians. At that time he expressed himself on the difficulty of systematizing a syncretistic religion.¹ The difficulties encountered at that time were compounded this time. Were the choice given again to write on this subject, the probable choice would be to refrain from it.

Ten years of study have gone into this work, either directly or indirectly. One conclusion reached was that there never would be a

¹Walter W. Snyder, "The Native American Church - Its Origin, Ritual, Doctrine and Ethic," Oklahoma Anthropological Yearbook, XVII, 1969.

perfect understanding of Navajo theology by a Christian theologian. The entire mind-set is different. This is not to imply that there can be no understanding, nor that the research for this work was not thorough. Within the limitations imposed on him, this writer has endeavored to go as far toward reaching an understanding of Navajo theology as, he believes, it is possible for a non-Navajo of the traditional type to go.

The original intent of this work was to cover the entire span of systematic theology. It was recognized that some elements of Navajo theology would probably not fit under each of the *loci* of Christian dogma, especially as these are understood within the framework of Lutheran theology. This was not possible. The work would have been of too great a length. The work is limited now to the doctrine of god, the doctrine of man, the doctrine of sin, and soteriology.

The doctrine of god will itself be the subject of five chapters. These five chapters will treat the subjects of: The First God; The Former Gods; The Latter Gods; The Present Gods; and, Demonology. There was a serious question whether the last two chapters should come under the doctrine of god or not. The first thought was that they should be under the separate categories of angelology and demonology since they both dealt with spirits. However, in both instances these are spirits that are worshipped. Therefore, the final decision was that they should properly go under the doctrine of god. This is one of the problems in fitting an animistic, pluralistic religion into a systematic theology.

The First God, Chapter III, presents some special problems which are dealt with more fully within that chapter. It is necessary, however, to point out now that it goes contrary to one of the basic premises of anthropologists. Anthropologists generally hold that religion is devel-

opmental with man, proceeding from animism into more complex forms of polytheism, until finally in a few instances, a monotheism develops.²

The chapters on god will show rather a developmental concept of god proceeding from one into many. The concept of one god is a nebulous one.

It does not appear in more than a very few written reports. It is seldom mentioned in oral traditions, and what little is mentioned is quite abstract. The writer believes though that the conclusion he has reached that the Navajo concept of god has its origins in monotheism is genuine. This is in harmony with the Christian belief that God is one, and that sin has caused all other religions to add to this oneness as their understanding was darkened.

The chapters on the former and latter gods deal with the hierarchal system of the gods. These were gods who as they were created, appeared, or multiplied, did their work, and then joining the first god, disappeared from a direct contact with man for the most part. The terms "former" and "latter" are used simply as groupings for a time sequence. The former gods made their appearance more or less at the same time, the creations of the first god; the latter gods came along at a later time, the creations or offspring of the former gods, or were found in a higher world as progress was made from the First to the Fourth World.

The present gods, the *yei*, are the spirit beings who have the direct control of such things as rain, lightning, hail, the various winds, or are the spirit beings of the various forms of plant and animal life. By way of time-sequence they make their appearance about the same time as mankind makes his first appearance. In the minds of most people, these

²Edward A. Hoebel, Anthropology: The Study of Man, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966) pp. 466, 575, 576.

are the beings most frequently associated with (sand paintings) which play such a part in the various sings. They are the spirit beings who are also portrayed by the *yeyi'be'chéi* dancers in many of the sings and ceremonials.

The *yeyi* are the equivalent of the *kachinas* (*katchinas*) of the Hopi and Zuni, as well as other Pueblo people. The concept of the *yeyi* was taken over by the Navajo from the Rio Grande pueblos during the time of the Navajo migrations, a time fairly recent in history. This development is traced in part in chapter II.

A persistent problem encountered both in research and writing was the problem of how to treat various subjects without unduly mixing them. In speaking of the gods, it is necessary to go into the history of man. In telling the history of man, it becomes necessary to relate some of the history of the gods. Navajo religion is neither theocentric nor anthropocentric in the pure sense. It is rather a balancing out of man and the gods in their respective relationship to one another, especially in the relationship between man and the *yeyi*.

This balancing effect is best seen in the Navajo concept of prayer,³ an issue that will not be dealt with as a separate subject in this work, and in the totality of the Ways, or ceremonials of the Navajo. For various reasons,⁴ the latter subject is not being treated, but a commentary follows later in this chapter.

³Ruth M. Underhill, *Red Man's Religion*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 115.

⁴One reason for the ceremonials not being treated in this work is that so many reports have already been written about most of them, based either on personal observations of the writers, or upon information gathered from Navajo informants.

Another reason is that each ceremonial is sufficiently complex to

Prayer for the Navajo has an entirely different meaning from what it has for a Christian, especially a Western Christian. Both are a communion with a higher being. But both the purpose and ritual of the two are vastly different. The Navajo in prayer proposes to be in communion with the gods by the fulfillment of a given ritual wherein he fulfills his bargain that the gods originally established with man. This bargain stipulates that if certain ritual objects are laid out in a certain way, if certain ritual forms and words are used, then the gods will respond in a certain way. The sum of all devotions is to promote harmony in nature - between man and the gods, between man and man, and within man himself in the interacting functions of body and mind. There is no pleading involved in Navajo prayers as there is in Christian prayers. It is simply a matter of "a bargain made, a bargain kept."

Navajo prayer differs greatly from the prayer of the Pueblo people, even though the ritual was borrowed by the former from the latter as we shall see in Chapter II, Navajo History in Brief. The very life-style of the two groups dictated this. The pueblo people were a sedentary, primarily agricultural, people. Thus their prayers have a primary purpose of bringing rain at the right time and like matters. The Navajo as a wandering hunter-gatherer people were more orientated to achieving a total harmony of nature because they were so dependent upon the vagaries of hail, wind, lightning, rain, and animal life.⁵

be the sole subject of a book itself.

A third reason would be that, in comparison to Lutheranism, the ceremonials would be the liturgy of the Navajo, not the dogmatic theology.

⁵Underhill, Red Man's Religion, p. 115.

The doctrine of man deals among other things with his creation. Actually the creation of man and the rest of the world is not an absolute. It is an evolutionary process, and the pinpoint of the beginning of man himself is impossible to find. Navajo mythology begins rather with the emergence of man into the present world and what has happened to him since then. There are generalizations about the previous worlds, and these are dealt with, but the primary concern is with the present world, man's place in it, and his relationship to it.

Sin is not a subject of separate treatment.⁶ Sin is, however, dealt with as part of the doctrine of man and has its effects in the consideration of soteriology. Sin may be summarized as a force destructive of the harmony that is to prevail in nature. It is not a soul-destroying agent; it does not totally alienate man from the gods, neither does it have an effect of any significance on the afterlife.

For the most part works on Navajo religion deal either with the expressed religious feelings of the people or, more commonly, with the externals of worship life. There is no lack of material dealing with the ceremonials or the sings of the Navajo. Authors dealing with these range from early Spanish priests to the later anglo explorers to government agents and military men to the present time when one finds many popular accounts as well as historical and ethnographic writings on the subject. It is hardly remarkable to find this, for the ritual is something that may be seen and experienced. Also, the elements of the religious beliefs which are here visible are the ones that can be most easily grasped by the non-theologically-trained mind.

⁶A comparative analysis of the concepts of sin for the traditional Navajo and the traditional Christian could provide sufficient material for a doctoral dissertation.

Even when dealing with Navajo informants, the normal answer to questions regarding the religion were answered by a recitation of something occurring in connection with a ceremonial, that is, the ritual itself, rather than the reason for the ritual. The same held true of the traders, and even of missionaries.

These rituals are frequently referred to as "Ways", because these are the "ways" or "paths" that one follows on the "Beauty Walk". Each one of them has a particular function to fulfill. Some of them are used for achieving several ends. All of them have the common feature of beginning, or at least incorporating the Origin Myth of man. This commonly deals with pre-emergence events, separation of the sexes, the emergence, and post-emergence events, though some of the lesser rituals begin at a later point in time in the Fourth World. Many of these Ways have both an Evilway and a Holyway variant. Some are either male or else female, while some have both branches. Each Way or variant thereof has a purpose.

We shall not treat the Ways as such in this work. The writer would refer to them as the liturgy of Navajo religion, and as such they would more properly form a companion work. Even then great difficulty would be experienced, for the rituals are so complex that most medicine men know only one of them, or possibly two. The complexities deal with the chants associated with each, the myths related to each, the dry paintings peculiar to each, as well as the medicine bundle unique to each one. Some of these Ways are used to prepare for another Way. Thus the Blessingway rite is associated with the preparation of prayersticks for the Red Antway.⁷

⁷Leland C. Wyman, The Red Antway Of The Navaho, (Santa Fe: Museum of Navajo Ceremonial Art, 1965), p. 29.

Much learned argument, and some not so learned, can be found for the number of Ways and whether they are in use today or not, whether they are all truly separate Ways, or if some are sub-groups or divergent rituals of others. As stated, this work will not deal with the Ways as such, but a list is here given to help the reader understand the complexities of the liturgy of Navajo religion. There is no desire to provoke a quarrel with other scholars on the following list whether these are each true Ways or not. The writer simply is stating those that have been presented to him as being in at least some usage today. These are: Hailway, Waterway, Plumeway, Navajo Windway, Chiracahua Windway, Nightway, Flintway, Beadway, Eagleway, Coyoteway, Upward-reachingway, Enemyway, Red Antway, Shootingway, Big Starway, Mountainway, Excessway, Motherway, and Beautyway.

The Evilway, or Ghostway, form is used to counteract the influences of native ghosts of the dead. The Holyway ritual is used for treating conditions which have arisen from the Holy People, the gods, and to cause immunity from further harm by the Holy People. Thus, the same factor is encountered in the various chantways in their entirety as is encountered in prayer; namely, that if man does his part, the gods will do theirs. The origin accounts of each of the Ways illustrates this. In each instance a holy being teaches someone the ritual for some particular healing rite with the stipulation that it must be done only with certain articles and in a certain order and form.

Soteriology as the Christian understands it does not exist in Navajo religion because of the lack of a concept of sin as the Christian religion understands it. There actually are many saviors, some divine and some human. These saviors are more in the realm of super folk-heroes

who deliver the people from various misfortunes. One perhaps achieves a prominence above others, Monsterslayer, who destroys the semi-divine monsters. The major heroes will be discussed in the chapter on Soteriology.

The Navajo religion, especially as evidenced in its ceremonies, is nearly always referred to as beautiful. For this reason, some readers will take exception to the writer's assessment of it in individual places, as well as to his final conclusions. It is beautiful in a way, the colors of the dry-paintings, the elaborateness of many of the rituals, and especially the sense of peace and well-being that seem to prevail after a ceremony's conclusion. But it actually is far from beautiful. There is fear, deep and dark, as we shall see in looking at those major divisions of theology which have been chosen. There is the attempt to erase the fear through the ceremonies and rituals, but it always returns.

Archaeologists in the area sometimes recover "dolls" in their excavations of Anasazie sites. These crudely-carved wooden figures are of Navajo origin. Sometimes they are recovered on the surface, but more frequently are found buried. These have been placed there to aid some woman in her pregnancy, especially if it appears that she may either be about to abort or to have a difficult time in delivery. Either of these two is believed to be caused by the spirit of some Anasazie woman who lost a child. The figure is given her to appease her for her own loss so that she will not cause difficulty now.⁸

This fear is brought out especially in the chapter on demonology. In Navajo theology there is a dichotomy in everything. Even the gods,

⁸Personal conversation with Editha Watson, former anthropologist of the Navajo Tribe.

especially the *yei*, have both a good and an evil side. In demonology the evil side is invoked. It is like cancer, a cell gone wild. So in the Navajo life there is the everpresent fear of witchcraft, or, even when that element is lacking, the fear of promoting disharmony which will cause the gods to bring sickness, loss of wealth, or death.

While the sacred trust of having every part of a chantway delivered from the gods necessitates its being performed in the exact way it was delivered, it does not stop a certain mockery of the gods and ceremonials. The so-called feather dance is burlesqued in a portion of the Windway chant⁹ so that everyone can see the obvious fakery employed. But even this is done for a purpose, namely, to show that the human is impersonating the divine to reproduce the myth for the effecting of a cure.

Never does this reach the point though that it does in Zuni ceremonialism. During the *Shalako* festival, while the *Shalako* gods are visiting in a home and the prayers are being chanted, the *Koyemshi*, or Mudheads, appear at the home. These creatures wear knobbed mask-headpieces of dried clay which have neither male nor female identity. The forms are distorted, and as the *Shalako* and the priests chant their prayers these creatures sing lewd songs, make crude jokes, and generally try to disrupt the proceedings. All this, though disturbing to a Western Christian concept of worship, has a purpose. They symbolize monsters who were born of incestuous relations of the first people. Thus they are a warning to all not to engage in matters that are taboo.¹⁰

⁹Leland C. Wyman, *The Windways Of The Navaho*, (Colorado Springs: The Taylor Museum, 1962), p. 196.

¹⁰Zuni Informant MK

It is difficult to ascertain exactly how much influence contacts with other Indian groups have exerted upon the development of present-day Navajo theology, especially those contacts which were made in their early migrations down from the North. But assuredly there were some. Influences of the Anglo civilization have made their impact, if in nothing else, in some of the subtle changes in costuming and in food offerings. This is a problem which cannot be solved to complete satisfaction.

Another problem in trying to set the information down for understanding by the Christian mind is the lack of formal and a material principle of theology. Especially to the Lutheran Christian the Gospel is referred to as the material principle because of its central role in faith and theology. On the other hand, the entire Bible, the Scriptures, has been referred to as the formal principle because it is the only norm for the Christian theology, and is its only source. The Navajo, of course, have no written body of doctrine such as the Bible, and apparently have made no attempt to establish a central doctrine.

Without attempting to use these terms, the author has, nevertheless, questioned informants to ascertain if they actually held such a distinction, and if they did, if it could be identified. The answers were always either simply puzzled, or else a distinct negative. Nevertheless, the author feels that both are present, though not understood as such by the adherents of the Navajo traditional religion. His conclusions in this regard will be given in the final chapter.

A few comments are now in order regarding the methodology employed in the preparation of this material. Living adjacent to the Navajo Reservation would seem to dictate purely an interrogatory approach, that is, that native informants would be sought to provide the information.

Especially one would believe this to be true if the informants were all medicine men. While this is certainly true in part, it was not considered accurate enough to be used as the only source.

Several problems arise in using native Navajo informants. One of these is that many have no understanding of the Christian frame of reference in theology. Another is that many of these informants have never looked for the reasons why they believe or do certain things. They only know that they do them or believe them. Another problem arises in that there have been changes, subtle most of the time, to be sure, but changes in belief nevertheless, influenced by contacts with Christianity, the peyote cult, and materialism. One of the greatest problems with many Navajo informants is the question of reliability.

Some are not reliable simply because they themselves do not know. These will make up answers, or give no answer. Others know, but will not tell because these things should remain hidden from outsiders. This is particularly true of some medicine men. They will tell an outright lie to avoid revelation of hidden things. Still another type of informant will tell the interviewer what he believes the one asking wants to know rather than what is true. Still others will make changes in parts of an account simply to make themselves appear important by knowing variations when such do not actually exist.

Reports of early arrivals who had some sense of the importance of accurate reporting were used. Prominent among these were Washington Matthews who worked for the government as surveyor and in other capacities, and Fr. Berard Haile, Franciscan of St. Michael's Mission near Ft. Defiance. Fr. Haile did much research into religious beliefs and social customs, as well as studying the language and providing one of the earliest Navajo dictionaries.

Reports of early traders were also read, as well as reports of the early Christian Reformed missionaries in the area. These men, too, were trying to find some understanding of the religion they had come to replace with Christianity. Because the reservation way of life remained virtually unchanged into the 1940's, it was felt that books and reports prepared by scholarly people until that time were reliable, especially when a number of different authorities were in agreement.

The writer also read as many books and reports written in recent years as possible. These were, however, read with caution, for in recent years there has been a tendency to glorify things Indian, and especially to color tradition with brighter colors than it deserved. Many of these later works were not scholarly productions, but were written for public consumption, or even for sensationalism.

Indian traders, especially from smaller, isolated posts on the Reservation were also interviewed. Most of them had attended various Navajo religious functions and could report from an anglo, and sometimes Christian, viewpoint. Men who have been in this position for a long time are generally confidants of their Navajo customers and know many of the myths.

Missionaries of various denominations were interviewed for whatever light they might shed on the subject. A number of them were abysmally uninformed about the religion with which they were in competition. And, of course, medicine men and other Navajo were interviewed. When one presented something different from or contrary to what had been previously gathered, the information was always cross-checked. Most frequently, then, the information would be discarded.

In his preparation the author studied Navajo, both in the classroom and by engaging in conversations as frequently as possible with the Navajo. Through Apache friends some cross-checking of Navajo theology was done. This was done because the Navajo and Apache were at one time all one people. The cross-checking enabled him to see what changes might have occurred in Navajo theology since the separation.

Martin Link, Director of the Navajo Tribal Museum in Window Rock, Arizona, provided valuable help. Without a doubt, the one person providing the most help was Editha Watson. She had been tribal anthropologist for the Navajo Tribe prior to her retirement. Due to her many friends among the Navajo a number of reliable informants were procured. She also graciously spent hours being interviewed, as well as providing virtually unlimited access to her own notes and records. She had previously written a number of monographs, had lectured extensively, and was at the time of her death finishing the manuscript for a major work on Navajo sacred places. She permitted the use of her notes on this manuscript also.

The author has tried to be consistent in the spelling of Navajo names. In the case of the word Navajo he has chosen to use this older, Spanish spelling, and to use it consistently for singular, plural, and collective forms. Exceptions to this rule are book titles or references which use a variant spelling. The same holds true of other words. While a common form is used, if another writer is being quoted who used a different spelling, the other form is then used. This holds true especially of earlier works when a standard for the Navajo language, at that time unwritten, had not yet been set. When this occurs, the original author's spelling is used with the present writer's spelling in parentheses after it.

The use of footnotes will be kept to a minimum. When there is general agreement among informants on a point, or when books or other writings generally agree, or when book and informant agree, these will normally not be cited with footnotes. Informants will be referred to more frequently than written works.

In the case of Navajo informants, as well as Zuni and Apache informants, names will not be given because some agreed to talk only if their names were not used in print. To remain consistent, and to protect those wishing anonymity, names are not used. Instead, a code is used. If the Navajo is a medicine man, he is identified by the letters MM, followed by a number. Other Navajo informants are identified by the letters NI, followed by a number. The one admitted witch who consented to an interview is simply referred to by that designation. The code identification is being submitted with the manuscript to the library of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.¹¹

The title for this work was chosen because it is so often said that the Navajo walk in beauty. But fear is ever present with this beauty. This contrast is illustrated by the sign outside Ft. Defiance, Arizona, which proclaims, "Navajos walk in beauty," while the surrounding area is littered with cans, bottles and other trash. The closing lines of a prayer from the Nightway Chant¹² are often quoted at various public ceremonial presentations and well illustrate the Navajo feeling toward the effect of the Ways performed.

¹¹A sample of the interview form used with informants is found as page 22.

¹²Washington Matthews, "The Night Chant, A Navaho Ceremony," Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History, 6 (May 1902): 159

In beauty I walk.
With beauty before me I walk.
With beauty behind me I walk.
With beauty below me I walk.
With beauty above me I walk.
With beauty all around me I walk.
It is finished in beauty.
It is finished in beauty.
It is finished in beauty.

INFORMANT SHEET FOR THE BEAUTY WALK

Name: _____ Age: _____ Sex: _____

Residence: _____ Ethnic Group: _____

Position: _____ Assumed Reliability: _____

If Medicine Man, how many years? _____ Whose Student? _____

If Medicine Man, which Way(s)? _____

I. Question Category on Doctrine of God(s). Was there ever only one?

Where did the first gods come from? What has happened to Bego chiddy?

Is one god greater than others?

II. Question Category on Demonology. Witchcraft in general? Werewolves?

Skinwalkers? Do you know of any witches? What must be done to avoid

being witched? Can witching be cured?

III. Question Category on Doctrine of Man. Where did man come from?

What is man's role in life? What happens to man when he dies? How can

man best get along with the gods?

IV. Question Category on Navajo history. Where did they come from?

How do they relate to other people? Holy places for Navajo? Taboos for

Navajo? Knowledge of historical time sequences?

V. Question Category on Soteriology. Does man need a savior? What

kind of a savior? Concept of sin? Result of sin? Man as his own

savior?

VI. Statement on why this informant was chosen. _____

CHAPTER II

NAVAJO HISTORY IN BRIEF

To achieve any measure of an understanding of Navajo theology there must be at least a basic understanding of Navajo history, for their theology is a combination of two strains. The one strain is that which they brought with them in their migration, the other that which was borrowed from various peoples with whom they came into contact in their early days in the Four Corners area, and is still being influenced by contacts with Christianity today.

Navajo history, up until the 18th century, is almost as difficult to report on with authority as is their theology. During this period the Navajo had no written language and did not come into contact with anyone else who might have been able to write a report about them. What is actually being dealt with is pre-history based on archaeological findings and on the legends of the people themselves. Care must be carefully exercised in dealing with both. Archaeologists have not uncovered everything, and what they have uncovered is always subject to interpretation. Legends and myths must be understood, as nearly as possible, not in the legend itself, but in the fact, or facts, behind the legend. This, too, is always subject to interpretation.

Navajo borrowing is still going on today, although today much of what happens is being recorded as it happens. This borrowing is taking place in religion as well as in the rest of their culture. A report

fifty years from now may well report a theology greatly changed, at least in outward forms, from that recorded in this report. Such, for instance, is already happening in the traditional wedding ceremony. This work does not concern itself with these present day changes, but limits itself to what has come to be considered as the traditional Navajo religion. The particular interest of this work is the theology which shapes the form of this religion, and a summary of their history will help to give indications.¹

The Navajo are relative newcomers to the Southwest. Seven hundred years ago there were no Navajo, but the ancestors of the Navajo, the *diné*, were beginning to filter into this area in small bands. (The Navajo still refer to themselves as the *diné*, or *dinneh*, the People.) They may well have been one of the contributing factors, perhaps the chief one, to the desertion by the pueblo groups of such places as Mesa Verde and Chaco Canyon. A number of scholars are presently at work testing such assertions.

Perhaps the beginning in tracing their history should be made in the language. This will lead us backward through their history to a place of origin. The language is of the Athapascan group. This is a northern tongue spoken by a number of bands in the Canadian Northwest and Alaska. It is also spoken by several of the coastal tribes in Washington, Oregon and northern California. Most of the languages in

¹In general, the chapter is not footnoted. It was not felt that this was necessary because the major works on Navajo history are in substantial agreement. The suggestion is offered that one of Underhill's books, such as The Navajos or Here Come The Navajo, both of which are listed in the bibliography, might be read for more information of a popular nature. For the reader desiring more detail or differing opinions on certain points he is simply directed to other works in the bibliography, especially to the works printed by the Santa Fe Museum and to the periodicals and bulletins.

this language family are now so different from one another that there is no common understanding or communication. But, some of the older Navajo when they were presented with northern Athapascan words have said, "That is how we once said them!" Today the Navajo word for a gourd dipper is the same as the northern word for a horn spoon, and the gliding flight of an owl is described by the same term their northern kinsmen use to describe the paddling of a canoe.

Ethnologists and etymologists are still trying to identify the larger and older world language roots of Athapascan, but have not succeeded as yet. Some believe that they have discovered a relationship with Korean, but this is still in the speculative realm.²

More than language roots, however, indicate an Asiatic origin. Facial features and body build of the northern Athapascans indicate the same, and among the Navajo today this is one of the three commonly accepted physical types.

Other customs and artifacts also indicate a northern origin, as well as having an affinity with certain items known to be common to north-eastern Asia. The moccasin was common to the northern Athapascans, whereas other Indians of the West and Southwest either wore sandals or went barefoot. Therefore, when an archaeologist finds a moccasin he scents Athapascan influence and suspects that the ancestors of the Navajo came through that region. The short, heavy bow which the Navajo used well up into historical times has a common ancestry with northern Athapascan and Asiatic bows. The use of a type of heavy hide armor was also common to both groups, as well as having been historically documented in Asia.

²Editha Watson said a Dr. Mannfried believed this.

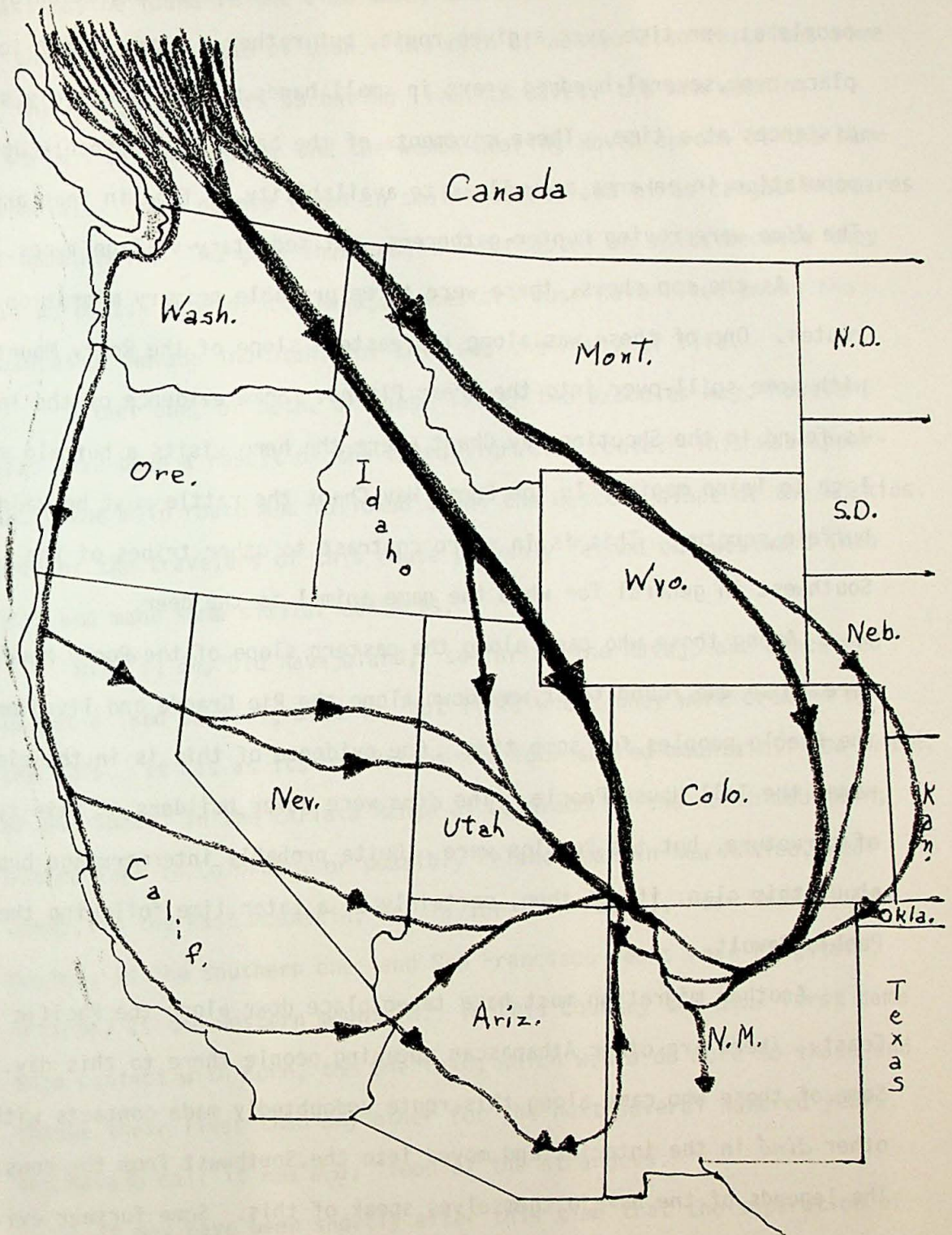
The "traditional hogan" of the Navajo is not the traditional dwelling which they brought into the Southwest. The latter was closely allied to that of their northern ancestors. It was a tall, conical framework of poles covered in various parts of the country with the material at hand. Thus, in some places it was covered with bark, in others with hides, and, as the *dine* arrived in the Southwest, with brush and hard-packed earth. An extension was added out of the one side as an entryway, but the basic shape remained the same. Some few of this type are still built on the Navajo Reservation today. They are called the "forked-pole hogan," or, in some instances, the "male hogan," as distinctive from the other type.

Another item brought from the north country, this one psychological and religious, was a fear of the dead and all their possessions. The Apache share in this fear of the dead. This is a fear which is not common to the Southwest otherwise. Most of the other Indians of the area have certain ceremonies which take place at the time of death and for some time afterward to release the soul of the dead to go on its journey. Certain placatory offerings may be made, but after that no further thought is given to the matter. A Zuni informant related how on the fourteenth day after a death in a house the door or a window is left open to allow the spirit to leave,³ but the dwelling is not abandoned or torn down as would be customary among the Navajo.⁴

A map on the following page traces the probable routes by which the *diné* migrated to the Southwest. These are the routes generally accepted by scholars, in part because of archaeological evidence, and

³Zuni informant MK.

⁴More will be said of this fear of the dead in Chapter VII, Demonology.



in part because of clan names and other evidences in the legends of the Navajo. We must bear in mind that this was not a mass migration of people at one time over a given route, but rather a process that took place over several hundred years in small bands moving relatively short distances at a time. These movements of the bands were probably due to population in an area as well as to availability of food in that area. The *dine* were roving hunter-gatherers, not sedentary village types.

As the map shows, there were three probable primary migration routes. One of these was along the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains with some spill-over into the Great Plains. Some evidence of the latter is found in the Shooting Way Chant where the hero visits a buffalo village to learn magic. In the Enemy Way Chant the rattle must be made of buffalo scrotum. This is in sharp contrast to other tribes of the Southwest in general for whom the game animal is the deer.

Among those who came along the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains were those who found their way down along the Rio Grande and lived among the Pueblo peoples for some time. One evidence of this is in the clan name, the Tall House People. The *dine* were never builders of this type of structure, but the Pueblos were. Quite probably intermarriage brought about this clan, if not then, certainly at a later time following the Pueblo Revolt.

Another migration must have taken place down along the Pacific Coast. There are other Athapascan speaking people there to this day. Some of those who came along this route undoubtedly made contacts with other *diné* in the interior and moved into the Southwest from the coast. The legends of the Navajo themselves speak of this. Some further evidence of this is found in the clan name, the Big Water People, a

reference to the ocean. Evidence of the crossing inland from the ocean coast may be found in the clan name, the Salt Water People, a reference to the Great Salt Lake of Utah. The myth of *sontso* also describes some of the Navajo ancestors as having lived in caves, the men wearing G-strings of yucca fiber and the women wearing woven aprons of the same material. These people lived on small rodents and birds caught in snares of human hair. The game thus caught was roasted on spits because they had no pots. Some of the Navajo ancestors must have lived among the Paiutes of Nevada and Utah, for this was their way of life.

Either one, or both, of these latter two examples may, however, also have been a result of the third migration route. This was apparently the main route and followed along the western slope of the Rockies. Some of the travelers of this route probably fanned out westward into Utah and made some similar contacts.

Diné'ta'áh, "Old Navajoland," so far as the Navajo are concerned is not a land they migrated to, but it is where they were created by the gods. It has as its boundaries the four sacred mountains: *De bentá*, or Big Sheep, in the LaPlata Range of Colorado is the north mountain; Blanca Peak in Colorado, or possibly Pelado Peak in New Mexico, near Jemez, is the east mountain; Mt. Taylor (San Mateo), near Grants, New Mexico, is the southern one; and San Francisco Peaks near Flagstaff, Arizona, is the western mountain. In this country the *diné* first came into contact with corn, the one thing which would do more to shape and change their lives than any other for the next several hundred years. The Navajo call it *naa'dáá*, "food of the strangers."

It may have been shortly after this time that the separation of the *diné* into what later were Navajo and Apache began. Some of the

people became more stabilized, raising corn as well as hunting and gathering. These became the ancestors of the Navajo. Others continued following the wilder course of hunting, gathering and raiding. These were the ancestors of the Apache. Some of these stayed in the vicinity of Old Navajoland. Others moved further south, spreading to both east and west.

Exactly how much was borrowed by the *diné* on their southward migrations will never be determined. This is true also of things and ideas religious. Some can, however, be ascertained with a fair degree of certainty. Those that can most clearly be identified are those that they encountered as they were entering and settling into this area, primarily the territory along the San Juan River near the common border area of what is today Colorado and New Mexico.

According to Navajo myth⁵ the first clan, *Kiyaa'áani*, the Tall House People, were created on the spot near Kinyá'á, a ruined pueblo of the Chaco Canyon group. Here they were joined by other groups who came into the territory. From the Chaco Canyon they migrated to relocate along the San Juan. Frederick Webb Hodge, in examining several versions of the myth, tried to determine the element of fact in each. He then concluded that their arrival along the San Juan was about 1485.⁶

Surely the theology and religion of the *diné* must have at first dealt largely with the hunter-gatherer way of life. This would mean, if

⁵The Navajo Origin Myth, or Emergence Myth, will be dealt with more fully in Chapter VIII, Man - His Origin and Destiny. At this point we simply wish to continue the history of the Navajo as archaeology and history record it for us to show the events and things which influenced the development of Navajo theology.

⁶Frederick W. Hodge, "The Early Navajo and Apache." American Anthropologist, Vol. 3 (July 1895): 223-240.

they ran true to form with the northern Athapascans, that religion revolved chiefly around the dreams of the hunter which revealed to him the proper "medicine" for the hunt. Now they had been exposed to corn and to the Pueblo ritual for its proper planting, cultivation and harvesting, as well as its use both as food and as a ritual object. It has been suggested that as corn was passed on from one people to another that the proper rituals were passed on with it.

Probably very early after their arrival in Old Navajoland the *diné* must have begun copying some of this ritual, although it did not become so much of a group ritual for them as it was for the Pueblos, but rather remained more of an individual practice as it had been for the hunter. So it remains for the Navajo today, not only in corn cultivation, but for religion in general. The medicine man practices his act for the sake of the individual. Sufficient Pueblo influence is present, however, that the entire group, family or clan, is present also to set their minds in harmony also through this experience.

Two more events, closely related to each other, were yet to shape the culture and religion of the Navajo. One was the arrival of the Spaniards in the area about 1600. The other event was the Pueblo Revolt in 1680 and the subsequent Spanish return twelve years later. Both had a profound effect on the Navajo.

The coming of the Spanish into the area had brought livestock, especially sheep and horses. Lesser gifts had come with them also: wheat, watermelons, chili, indigo and iron goods, to name only a few. Apparently the Navajo had little direct contact with the Spaniards during these first eighty years of their domination, although the Spanish first gave them the name they now bear, *Apache de Nabaju*, the strangers who

cultivate. The Navajo were mostly content to slip into a pueblo, mingle with the people for a time, and slip out again. As the Pueblo Indians began to get a few sheep of their own the Navajo began stealing some. They probably began casting covetous eyes at the horses of the Spaniards also.

Navajo myth, of course, does not reflect this in its tales. According to the myth the Navajo had horses and sheep from the very beginning. This serves to show that much of the Navajo myth of creation, of the gods and men, is of fairly recent origin.

What the Navajo gained during this period of time was a mere pittance. The best was yet to come. When, for the first time in their history, the Pueblos all joined together to fight the Spanish, the real rain of blessing fell. The Pueblos were joined by the Apaches, those fierce, marauding cousins of the Navajo, and the destruction of the Spanish reign was accomplished. From the Rio Grande to Zuni to the Hopi mesas, the Spanish were killed or driven out. The Navajo apparently took no direct part in the fighting, but stayed on the outskirts gathering in the sheep and horses which ran off. A Navajo quotation contends, "Because of war flowers which have become beautiful exist. Because of it rain exists, they say."

To the "food of strangers" had now been added sheep which could provide both meat and clothing, and horses which made the Navajo more mobile. Again the life style changed. The hunter-gatherers who had begun to settle down as farmers began to wander again, but in a much more limited way and in a purposeful fashion. Crops would be planted in late spring in a watered canyon while the sheep were taken into the high country to graze until harvest time when they would be brought down again. The horse made it possible to move large flocks and families with ease.

The Spaniards returned from Mexico with a vengeance in 1692. Some of the villages gave in peacefully, but the more rebellious ones such as Acoma and Jemez fought. As the Spaniards wiped out the opposition the Pueblos many times ran off to intermingle with the Navajo. The Jemez Pueblo either moved in its entirety among the Navajo, or at least sent all its unmarried women with the request that husbands be found for them so the blood would not die out. According to Navajo custom which reckons descent through the mother, these became the founders of the Coyote Pass, or Jemez, clan. Other villages have similar tales of some of their people living among the Navajo. The Spanish after the re-conquest also reported seeing "Christian Indians" living among the Navajo on several occasions.

Strong archaeological evidence is also found of this throughout *Diné'tá'áh* in an intermingling of Navajo and Pueblo homes of the same period. The Navajo homes are generally scattered in the valleys, while the pueblitos, as they are called, are grouped on the mesa tops. This period lasted until about 1765-1770. After this time most of the Pueblos returned to their own villages apparently, while some others had become Navajo and remained as an integral part of the culture and the people. Yet another strain had been added.

Certain conclusions, cultural and religious, must be drawn from this even if there is not always a written record of some of these events. Navajo myth is totally unreliable here, for it ascribes all these things to acts of the gods "in the beginning."

There has been no physical evidence found that the Navajo ever practiced weaving before they had wool. Therefore, they must have learned from watching the Spanish and the Pueblo Indians that sheep could be sheared and cloth made from the wool. In fact, they must even have

learned their style of herding sheep from these others. But, whereas the Spanish and the Pueblos sent only two or three with the sheep while the others stayed in the villages, the Navajo moved the entire family as they moved the flocks.

Weaving, however, is not something learned by casual observation. It takes a girl many years of sitting and working with her mother to learn the skill. The only logical explanation of their learning the art is that it happened while the Pueblos lived among them, for they were skilled weavers. The Spanish, even before they had been driven out, reckoned value in "mantas", the blankets woven by the Pueblos.

A step further must be taken and the suggestion made that this implied intermarriage was a common thing during those years, for it was the man among the Pueblos who was the weaver, and among the Navajo it is the women. According to taboos of both cultures it would not have been possible for a strange man to be a woman's teacher. By conjecture it may be supposed that a Pueblo man married to a Navajo woman would despair of teaching sons raised in a hunter society to weave, but that he would rather transmit this skill to his daughters. The skill was surely augmented in later years when Hopi women were taken captive. Among the Hopi both the men and the women wove. The Navajo and Hopi both to this day state that the Hopi villages were raided for women who could teach weaving.

A further supposition may be made that during the period of time the weaving skill was being transmitted that religious arts and knowledge were also being imparted by Pueblo men, either directly or indirectly, to Navajo men and boys. It is quite evident from the dry painting drawings which the Navajo make of the *yeyi* that they are copies of the Pueblo gods. They are dressed in the kilted style of the gods of the Pueblos

not in the loin cloth hunter garb of the Athapascans. As has been mentioned, at an earlier time already the Navajo must have procured the chants for growing and using corn. Now, with a more intimate association they surely learned other chants, myths and rituals also.

The Navajo added, subtracted, and chanted these ceremonies to adapt them to his own way of life and cultural needs. Remnants of Pueblo chants are evident in a number of Navajo chantways; and among the Zuni the Big Firebrand Society has a number of chants in Navajo, while the Hopi have a clown play in Navajo.

The Navajo took a religious skeleton from the Pueblos and created services of liturgical grandeur from them. The number, size, style and coloring of the dry paintings was enlarged, the simple figures being elaborated upon and developed into a high art form. Even the material of the paintings was different. The Pueblos used ground meal and pollens, while the Navajo substituted colored sand, ground rock and charcoal for the meal. The Navajo retained the eight days of purification and the offerings of the Pueblos, including the prayer sticks and their "jewels" of white shell, turquoise, red shell and jet, but they added a ninth day, or actually a night, when the public spectacle allowed everyone present to partake in the spirit blessing. They retained such beings as the Twin Sons of the Sun, but, whereas in the Hopi villages they were peaceful, though mischievous, miracle workers, with the Navajo they became conquerors of the Monsters, riding on the rainbow and armed with the straight and the jagged lightning.

The purposes of the ceremonies were also different for the two groups of people. The Pueblo ceremonies were community events conducted by a moiety of priests to bring rain and other blessings on the entire

village. The Navajo still continued his original trend of the solitary visionary seeking help for himself, later formalized with a medicine man singing over the individual for his well-being. Now the medicine man no longer had a single vision, but rather the whole inter-twining of the northern myth remnants with the Pueblo myths and accompanying chants, modified to fit their needs.

After the return of the Spaniards had been accomplished and the Pueblos had largely returned to their villages, the continuing development and refinement of religious ritual and theology no doubt continued. From this point on, however, now within the period of recorded history, the Navajo apparently no longer borrowed religious ideas in any large measure from others. They were now an established people with an established culture and religion. True, at a later time they borrowed some aspects of both Christianity and the peyote cult, but these do not belong in a study of their traditional religion at this time. The next 250 years of Navajo history can be encapsulated in a few paragraphs. From 1725 until 1860 the Navajo became "Lords of the Soil." They raided both the Pueblos and the Spanish, as well as fighting Utes and Comanches. Flocks did not multiply fast enough by natural means to suit them, so the increase could be augmented by stealing whole flocks from the Spaniards. Later they did the same with the Mexicans, sometimes even raiding down into Mexico itself. Young men established themselves by stealing horses from the Utes and others, while they in turn were raided frequently by the Utes for women. Occasionally they were even attacked by some of the Pueblos, especially the Jemez, Zuni and Hopi. Women and children were stolen from the Pueblos. The Navajo raids reached even into Kansas where they raided the Pawnee for slaves whom they sold to the Spaniards.

In 1824 a change of government took place when Mexico became independent, but little, if any, change took place in Navajo lifestyle. Their name for the Spaniard and the Mexican is the same, and their attitude toward both was the same. True, some of the Navajo, especially in the area of Cebolleta, settled down, became peaceful, and sided with the Mexicans. These became known as the Alien, or Enemy, Navajo to their wilder and more independent brethren. Later the Aliens frequently served as guides when the Americans came.

The coming of the Americans in 1846 to take the territory of New Mexico provided not only a change in government, but the next big change in Navajo lifestyle. There are a number of stories of early encounters of the two groups, Navajo and American, but they are not germane to this writing. One only might be mentioned to illustrate how the Navajo can create fantasy out of the ordinary. When the first party of Americans headed west from Santa Fe to contact the Navajo for purposes of a peace treaty, the Navajo reports stated that the new people had such long ears that they reached to the ground, and at night these people wrapped themselves in their ears to sleep.

The Navajo at first looked upon the Americans as People, but after the Americans insisted upon the Navajo putting a stop to their raiding, in fact, tried to put a stop to it by force of arms, they were viewed simply as another enemy like the Spaniard or the Ute. Peace treaties were made with the Americans when it was convenient to the Navajo, and when it was more convenient to fight they did that.

Ultimately in 1863 the great campaign against the Navajo was launched to force them to be peaceful and stop raiding. This campaign culminated in Kit Carson's burning of everything in Canyon de Chelly,

which forced the Navajo to surrender and be relocated at Ft. Sumner, New Mexico, in 1864. Four miserable years went by. The relocation experiment was a disaster for both anglo and Navajo. The crops planted at Ft. Sumner failed. The livestock died or were killed for food. Navajo men continued to slip away on raids, and whole bands deserted to return to their own country. Finally, in June of 1868, a treaty was signed and they returned to their own country, but a smaller country than before. They were again as poor as when they had first arrived.

The early reservation years were bad. Crops failed, the flocks were small. Navajo men began going off to work for wages, especially for the new railroad which was building through their country, and so added yet more facets to their culture. The commonly accepted story among the original anglo settlers in this country was that the present day Navajo hogan was a result, in both size and style (six or eight sided), of their stealing railroad ties from which to build them. For years the whites failed to fulfill promises of rations, other goods, work and schools, though when the schools did come the Navajo would not send their children. Other things which were supplied by the government were frequently wasted. Two cultures were on a collision course because neither understood the other; drunkenness became a common problem, especially along the railroad, and poverty was everywhere.

Gradually things improved. The Navajo acquired more land and more flocks. There is no need to deal with such incidents as government stock reduction programs and off-reservation boarding schools. The Navajo were growing in number, and, gradually, in wealth. They were still far behind the dominant anglo society, however, and then, suddenly there was World War II. The young men went off to fight. When they returned the desire

was strong for what they had seen elsewhere. The Fourth Beginning for the Navajo took place - that period in which we are now living.

Through all these phases and times had been the traditional religion. It was a religion that evolved and changed as locations changed and new cultural contacts took place it is true, but it was a religion that continued to maintain that it had always been that way. It continues to be actively at work today as a force beyond the reckoning of many. This traditional religion is what will be examined for its theology in the balance of this work.

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST GOD

The doctrine of god in Navajo theology cannot be dealt with in the same way in which it would be dealt with in a Lutheran dogmatics text. A basic problem is the Navajo concept of a number of divine and semi-divine beings. Another problem is that some of these deities intervene directly in the affairs of mankind, whereas others do not, at least not at the present time. Yet another problem is arranging the gods either by importance or in a time-space relationship. This is because of two different basic emergence myths which do not follow the same pattern of appearance or importance of the deities. Another problem is the semi-divine status of certain birds and animals, especially the first of the species created, who are frequently personified. Not the least of the problems is the one god, or original god, concept. It is this concept with which the present chapter deals.

Writers on Navajo religion are virtually unanimous in the opinion that the Navajo religion recognizes no first god, nor a god who is greater than any of the others.¹ The two major emergence myths and their variants would tend to bear this out. But neither of these myths goes so far as to say that they begin either at the exact beginning of time or in eternity. They simply begin in what is called the First World.

¹An exception to this is found in the account of Hasteen Klah, reported by Mary C. Wheelwright in Navajo Creation Myth, (Santa Fe: Museum of Navajo Ceremonial Art, 1942) p. 39.

The writer is himself sure, however, that there was a first god for the *diné*, and that he has simply been forgotten, or deliberately ignored, in the oral tradition. It almost seems that everything that preceded the arrival of the *diné* in the Four Corners area has been deliberately blotted out, though no proof can be offered for this theory. The heavy borrowing of Pueblo traditions and the subsequent refinement and adaptation by the Navajo has resulted in the entire history of gods and men being centered in the Four Corners area.

A common form of preface to various parts of the emergence myth which occurs in both written accounts and in the oral recitations of parts of the various chant ways is the expression, "They say that." Who 'they' are is never identified, but this should not be surprising, for the Bible employs the same technique, when for instance Christ is quoted as saying, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old times..."²

Five of the Navajo informants queried responded that there had been a first god before all the others. Two anglo traders and Editha Watson, former anthropologist for the Navajo Tribe, were all convinced of it. The Navajo informants who believed this all degenerated the phrase, "They say that," to a "Some say that," preface.

One informant, an anglo trader,³ could offer no real proof for his feeling that originally there had been only one god. His feelings were based upon his contact with the Navajo and his close friendships with a number of them, including several medicine men. He said that on a number of occasions he had heard one of the medicine men, as well as several of his other older customers, refer to the "spirit of the world"

²Matt. 5:21.

³AT3

in the sense of a superior power. He saw in the ceremonial "smoking" of the six sacred directions (the four cardinal points of the compass plus the zenith and the nadir) as an invocation of the spirit of the world. When the writer questioned several Navajo informants⁴ the answers on this point ranged from, "I don't know," to "I do not think so." Two of them said, "We do that because we were told to do that. Those are the holy directions which guide our lives."

Another trader, now retired, who had had posts at several places on the Navajo Reservation,⁵ also expressed the opinion that there was an underlying superior god concept even though the Navajo themselves did not recognize it. He quoted one of his former customers as saying, "Some say that there was one time one big god who made the other gods. Then he went away because they wanted to do everything themselves, so he let them. Mebbeso it was the same big god the white mans have." He quoted another old Navajo⁷ as having said, "Some say that *Bego' chiddy* he made the others because he got lonesome, but I don't know because this was before there were any Navajo."

Many hours were spent in discussing this question with Editha Watson. As tribal anthropologist for the Navajo Tribe, a Presbyterian, and an author of numerous monographs dealing with Navajo culture and religion, she had perhaps the best perspective on what the writer was searching for, both from his viewpoint and from the viewpoint of the Navajo. She had also had the advantage of knowing many of the older Navajo who

⁴NI4, NI5, NI12, NI14, NI26

⁵AT2

⁶NI29

⁷NI30

were not available to this writer as informants. Her opinion was that at one time there had probably been a concept of a supreme god, whether pre-existent of the others or not, which had since been lost because it was not necessary to the present religious ceremonial practices. She, too, had heard some of the older Navajo say that some of the old ones had said that at one time there was a god who made the other gods, but they didn't know who he had been, nor what had happened to him. She said that she could recall one old woman⁸ who had told her that the Great Horned Rattlesnake had made all the gods and had made Monument Valley to be their home. In all her research of Navajo sacred places, these were the only references she had heard.

Father Berard Haile in his research of Navajo religion was unable to find any evidence of one great god among them, yet felt that at one time there might have been.⁹

One informant stated¹⁰ that, "Some say that a long time ago, before that, the First World god made the first Holy People, the Ant People, and put them in the First World. I don't know, but that is what some said."

Another informant stated¹¹ that, "When I was a boy I heard some say that there was another world before the first world. In this place there was a god who made all the other gods. He made some for the Zuni, and he made some for the Acoma, and he made some for the Jemez, and he

⁸NI31

⁹Unpublished notes of Fr. Berard Haile, St. Michael, Ariz.

¹⁰NI5

¹¹NI15

made some for the Hopi, and he made Jesus and some others for the *Bilagáana*. But I don't know who he was."

A medicine man stated,¹² "When I was beginning to study as a boy to be a medicine man, I heard one say (his teacher?) that some said that there had been a god that thought up the other gods. But this is not important. What is important is that we know what the gods have told us we must do. It is also important that we know which of the gods we must talk to. It is also important that we make sure we do the things right that they have told us we must do."

Two other informants¹³ both thought that perhaps *Bego'chiddy* had been the first god since he was the great god.

The writer doubts very much that *Bego'chiddy* ever figured in the thinking of the Navajo as the first god. His reason for thinking thus is that in the *Hanéłth'nayhe* Emergence Myth he does not loom at all large in the pantheon of gods, but is simply a passing figure.¹⁴

It has not been possible to prove the existence of a first god in Navajo theology as proof is normally counted. But this writer is convinced that such a deity indeed existed in their earlier thinking, but that he has been lost since their arrival in the Four Corners area, perhaps deliberately as a part of the process of acculturation. Here there was no need for the religious beliefs which had been theirs in the north country.

¹²MM2

¹³NI16, NI17

¹⁴Much more will be said of *Bego'chiddy* in the next chapter. According to one myth he was the great god, according to the other a very minor god. There is in this writer's mind even a very serious doubt if there was a *Bego'chiddy* in the Navajo religion until very recent years; more of this in Chapter IV.

In the Navajo concept of the doctrine of god it is of little or no importance if there was a first god or not. There is definitely no concept of god as the Lutheran Christian is able to understand God as the Eternal One. The deities of Navajo religion are ones necessary to a particular time and circumstance in life. It is necessary that someone knows the rules the deities have set down for mankind to follow in maintaining or restoring harmony. The Navajo concept of the doctrine of god is much closer to that of the Graeco-Roman world than to that of the Christian.

It was found in researching this material that missionaries almost without exception were woefully ignorant of the Navajo theology, and actually knew little more about the doctrine of god than that there were many of them. This writer has been frequently criticized by missionaries for attending "sings", even though his purpose was to gather information. The main thrust of the criticism appeared to be that he was, at least, tacitly condoning the Navajo religion and worship by his presence.

CHAPTER IV

THE FORMER GODS

If the *Hadenigai* Myth is followed, information concerning the former gods, that is, those present when the Emergence Myth begins, is much more definitive than that concerning the first god. Variants do exist, however, and a significant number of questions are again raised.

According to commonly accepted Navajo myth they are now living in the Fourth World. Everything began in the First World. Progress was vertically upward, and some of this progress will be traced in this chapter and the succeeding chapter. More will be traced in Chapter VIII, the Doctrine of Man. Beginning in the First World, *Jah'don'konoth*, Running Pitch Place, also known as the Black World, there were six gods present. These gods, also referred to as people or persons, were: *Bego'chiddy*, *Jash'jesh'jin*, *Etsáy-Hastéen*, *Etsá-Assun*, *Etsáy'Hash'kéh*, and *Ashéen-Assun*.

Bego chiddy is referred to as the great god, or, sometimes, as noted in the last chapter, the first god. He is described as having yellow hair and blue eyes, larger in size than the others, and with a deep voice. The general character of *Bego'chiddy* is that of patience and tolerance with creation. His father was *Shundéen*, the Daylight, and his mother was *Shah'bek'loth*, Ray of Sunshine. Navajo names are quite definitive. His father, therefore, was that light which comes after dawn, but before sunrise. His mother was a ray of sunlight as separated from other sunlight by clouds. The parental names would suggest that he had

his origins in the very beginning and that he had a particular brightness and separateness.¹

Bego'chiddy might well be referred to as the creator god, in fact, some informants insisted that he made or created the other five gods first found with him in the First World, though most informants did not, nor do the oral traditions.² There are other gods whom he did create, each of whom will be mentioned at the proper time. Four separate terms are used to refer to his creative work: built, created, planted and made. This terminology is repeated for the second, third and fourth worlds.

In the First World *Bego'chiddy* built four mountains; a white mountain in the east, a blue mountain in the south, a yellow mountain in the west, and a black mountain in the north. Then he made the mountains that surround the whole earth, then the colored mountains that come and go, and, finally, the red mountain in the middle of the world.

In the First World he created *Willáchée*, Red Ants; *Willa'zhíni*, Black Ants; *Willá'łitsoi*, Yellow Ants; *Willáchée'tsai*, Red and Black Ants; *Nicki'dol'zholi*, Gray Ants; *Nahasan'b'Hogándi*, Termites; and *Wol'azi*, Midges. The ants play important roles in the later emergences to the other worlds, as well as in present day healing ceremonies, especially the red and the black ants. This will be dealt with in Chapter VIII, The Doctrine of Man, as well as in the latter portion of this chapter.

¹Here we face one of the baffling aspects of the Navajo deities, that they should have parents. To the Christian it is incomprehensible as he views God without beginning. Not only does *Bego'chiddy* have parents, but they are parents which have not even been created as yet. The other five gods also all have parents. Coyote Man has only a mother. This led one Navajo to suggest that possibly his father was a devil.

²MM3, MM7, N14, N15, N16

After he had created the ants, *Bego'chiddy* planted *Lukatso*, Bamboo, on the east side. He planted *N'd'gilly'tso*, Big Sunflower, on the south side. *Luka*, Reed, was planted on the west side, and *N'd'gilly*, Little Sunflower, on the north side.

When the planting was completed he made the First Law, *Tsa'tlai*, of which there is no explanation or definition given. In each succeeding world he made one more law. Following the making of *Tsa'tlai* he created another god, *Kay'dés'tighi*, Wrapped in a Rainbow.

In the second and third worlds respectively, *Bego'chiddy* remade and replanted the mountains and plants. In addition, in the second world, *Naho'dokl'ízh'dasakah*, the Blue World, he planted cotton - white cotton in the east, blue cotton in the south, yellow cotton in the west and black cotton in the north. He created the bumble-bee, yellow jacket and black wasp. He also made twin men and twin women.

In the third world, *Nah'íítzoi'dasakah*, the Yellow World, in addition to everything taken to it, or re-made, from the second world, *Bego'chiddy* made a mountain in the center of the earth, *Tsilth'tla'del'tai*; a second mountain, *Tsilth'ń'del'tai*; a third mountain, *Tsilth'tah'del'tai*; and a fourth, *Tsilth'téen'del'tai*.³

Then he made *Tohe'egléen*, Water Meeting Place, and *Tohe'nostleh*, Crossing Waters, where one river flowed west to east and one flowed north

³It is seen here again as it was in the accounts of the first and second worlds, and as it will be seen again in the fourth world, the Navajo has a pre-occupation with the significance of mountains in regard to his world. It seems entirely natural considering the land in which he lives. He also builds the majority of his pollen altars on the mountains and hills, and many of the mesas and mountains are designated as the homes of certain deities. Here there is a commonality with many other religions. Even David comments on the relationship of the hills, man, and the help of God, in Ps. 121:1.

to south. In the east part he placed *Tohilt'lachee*, Red Turtle. In the south he placed *Iknee lacrée*, Red Thunder. In the west he placed *Tahastéen lacrée*, Red Otter. In the north he placed *Teol'tsodi lacrée*, Red Water-monster.⁴

Bego'chiddy also made *Nahodoh'othle*, Quick-sand Spring, and *Lukatso sakah*, Growth Place of Bamboo. Next he made *Tsilth'lakai*, White Mountain, near Silverton (Telluride), Colorado. He placed White Thunderbird on top of the mountain. Inside the mountain he placed four cyclones - white, blue, yellow, black.⁵ He also placed into it hail of the same four colors.

Hash'jesh'jin, Son of Fire, now created *Gahgi*, Crow, and *Ea'ah'ee*, Magpie. This is why these two birds are so mischievous. They have taken the characteristics of their creator. They also steal because he did.

Next he created *Data'teke*, Hummingbird, and *Hospiddy*, Turtle Dove. Then he made all kinds of animals and breathed life into them. He ordained that Wolf and Mountain Lion should be kings over the animals, and Oriole and Mockingbird kings of the birds.

Bego'chiddy now created man: *Etsay hasléen*, Made Now; *Astra'gah*, Center Man; *Adegeh hasléen*, Behind Man; and *Lakah'kestrah hasléen*, Fourth Man. He also created four women of the same names. According to the oral tradition, Navajo were there from the beginning, but now *Bego'chiddy* also

⁴One cannot help but wonder if this might not be an oral tradition remnant of the Biblical account of the placing of the four rivers at the time of creation around the Garden of Eden. The four creatures, and, of course, they would be four, for this is the holy number, are a distortion of the angel placed at the entrance to the Garden after man's fall into sin, for these are the guardian creatures of the Navajo world.

⁵Winds, like the mountains, figure prominently in Navajo religion. Winds even hold up the earth. The winds of the next world that dry up the flood bear a close relation to Gen. 8:1 and the drying out of the flood of Noah's time.

made Hopi, Zuni and Taos people. All the people lived together in the middle of the earth.⁶

It was at this time that *Bego'chiddy* also created corn of the four colors of white, blue, yellow and black. All, plants, animals and people, spoke the same language. The mountains gave light, for the sun and moon were not made yet.⁷ He now made Rainbow House in which he and the other five gods who had been in the first world lived. Then he made four gods for the Zuni. The tall one was called *Yeh'nez*, and the other three were called *Yeh*.⁸

Next should really, according to the Navajo Emergence Myth, come an account of *Bego'chiddy* and people in their interactions in this Third World, but because the story continues through into the Fourth, or present, World, the matter will be discussed in Chapter VIII, The Doctrine of Man, and in Chapter IX, Sin and Soteriology. It was because of the sins of people that *Bego'chiddy* made the Third Law, "Males shall rule, and whatever your chiefs say must be done."

One day *Estsá-assun*, First Woman, and *Ashéen-assun*, Salt Woman, were walking by *Tohe'nostleh*, Crossing of the Waters, at the whirlpool

⁶This and future creations of man will dealt with in Chapter VIII, The Doctrine of Man.

⁷The question has often been raised in connection with the Genesis creation account as to where the light came from before the sun and moon were created. Does the Navajo legend relate one of mankind's earliest attempts to answer that question? Perhaps this part of the legend was even brought from Asia, for it is not part of any of the Pueblo peoples' legends.

⁸The tall god is called *Shalako* by the Zuni. The other three are *Shulawitsi*, Fire God; *Saiyatasha*, Longhorn; *Yamuhakto*, Stick of Authority. Together with a second *Yamuhakto*, and a *Hututu*, the deputy of the Longhorn, they make up the Council of the Gods who participate each year in the *Shalako* festival at Zuni.

called *Away'nah'olth*, and saw a baby floating in the waters. *Etsáy'hash'keh*, Coyote Man, heard the noise and came to investigate. When he saw the baby, he took it out of the water and hid it under his coat for four days. At the end of this time a wailing started from all four directions. *Bego'chiddy*, who already knew what happened,⁹ sent the crow east to find out what had happened, the magpie south, the hummingbird west, and the dove north. None of them could find the cause of the wailing, but each saw a storm of the proper color direction coming. *Bego'chiddy* and the other five gods went out in all four directions to gather some of everything that had been made or created. All this was put inside *Lukatso*, Big Bamboo.

Est'san'natah, Head Woman, now told *Etsáy'hasléen*, Made Now, "Sing, I pray you." *Bego'chiddy* told her to sing from this the first three ceremonies. This ceremony is called *Chalth'yilth'nahgih'éh*, Wanderer in the Dark.¹⁰

Two spirits stayed, the female, *Kith'nah'ha'lithy*, Spirit of Dusk, who lived in *Konth'lachée*, House of Fire. Her house had a door of *Niltche'dil'kohni*, Smooth Wind. The male spirit was *Kith'nah'liz hini*, Spirit of Dark, who lived in a house called *Chalth'yilth'hoghan*, House of Darkness, which had a door of *Nehochée dothinlah*, Heavy Wind.¹¹

⁹This is the closest reference made to an attribute of omniscience for any of the gods in any of the myths.

¹⁰More will be said of this chant in both Chapters VIII and IX. It will receive particular attention in the latter because it is one of the few mentions of eternal punishment.

¹¹No mention is made of the creation of these two spirits just as there is no mention made of the beginnings of the spirits who were parents of the gods, or of some of the latter spirits who were present when *Bego'chiddy* created things to give life to them. Nearly all informants reported that the spirits had all always been and did not have to be made.

Hot waters now began to rush at *Lukatso*, Big Bamboo. They were called *Toh'bazdezkeh* and *Toh'bazdez'nah*. *Lukatso* could not grow, therefore, *Bego'chiddy* moved it to *Tohe'egleen*, Water Meeting Place. It still would not grow, so *Bego'chiddy* moved it to *Nahodoh'othle*, Quicksand Spring. There it began to grow. The turkeys were unable to get inside *Lukatso*, therefore, they clung to the outside, climbing higher as the water rose. This is why the tips of their tails are different colored, the hot waters darkened them. *Lukatso* still was not able to grow tall enough to reach the next world. *Bego'chiddy* made a white cloud at its top and Spider Man and Spider Woman wove a railing of web around its edge so no one would fall off.

Bego'chiddy now called a council. Wolf, who had a head-dress of white corn and a white eagle feather, and Mountain Lion, who had a head-dress of yellow eagle feathers and yellow corn, were asked what wrong had been done. Because they were unable to answer, they were removed from office as chiefs over the animals. The two birds were left to rule over all the animals and birds.

The Chief of the locusts said that he would go up into the next world to investigate. He called for the Ant People to build trails up as high as they could. The red ants built a black trail, the yellow ants a yellow trail, and the black ants a sparkling trail. None of them reached the hole into the next world. Locust then tied an arrow to his forehead and shot upward through the hole into the Fourth World, *Hahj'éehah*, the Blue World. There a big white bird, *Chéestehe'lakai*, tried to kill him, but Locust kept diving under the water. The big white bird then swallowed his own arrow and asked Locust if he could do the same. He pushed his arrow through his heart. This defeated the bird. Next, a

large blue bird tried to defeat Locust. He swallowed his arrow twice. Locust pushed his arrow through his own heart twice. A yellow bird now tried it by swallowing his arrow three times, while the locust chief pushed his arrow through his own heart three times. Another white bird swallowed his arrow four times, and the locust pushed his arrow through his heart four times, thus defeating the four evil birds. He then returned to the Third World and told the people it was safe to come out, but they were afraid, especially so because the locust chief now spoke with a chee-chee sound because the arrow had left a hole in his throat.

Bego'chiddy then stepped forth into this new world and stepped into a pile of mud. He saw a white cloud in the east and had the Rainbow Lightning take him there where he saw *Hash'je'altye*, great god of the *Yeh'bechai*. After a friendly visit, *Bego'chiddy* ran back on top of the water to his mud pile. He then looked to the south where he saw a blue cloud with rain showers. Again the Rainbow Lightning carried him. There he met *Be'ganaskiddy*, Bringer of Seeds. Again there was a friendly visit and *Bego'chiddy* ran back over the water to his mud pile. Seeing a yellow cloud in west, *Bego'chiddy* visited it, carried there by the Rainbow Lightning. Here he found *Hashje'ho gahn*, another great god with whom he visited. Again he returned to his mud pile. Looking to the north he saw a white cloud with rain. He traveled there on the back of Rainbow Lightning and met another *Be'ganaskiddy*. *Bego'chiddy* returned once more over the water to his mud pile.

Here he stood and looked at the four other gods standing up to their chests in water. When he nodded to them they all four began pushing the water back with their canes until it ran off into rivers. After the water ran off the world only petrified wood and badlands were left.

Dead beasts who had drowned in the water were lying in the mud. *Bego'chiddy* blew on these and they became strange-shaped rocks, and a crust formed on the mud.

After this he looked to the east and saw twelve *Yeh* at the edge of the world who had blue faces. Six were male, *Hash'je'baka*; and six were female, *Hash'je'baad*. To the south, the west, and the north he saw the same. All were friendly.

Bego'chiddy now returned to the Third World and sent Badger up. He made it through the hole safely, but he sank in mud up to the first joint of his legs. This is why badgers have black feet to this day.

How should the earth be dried so people could live in it? *Bego'chiddy* sent up *Iknée'lakai*; White Thunder, *Niholtso'alkai*, White Cyclone, *N'dlohe'lakai*, White Hail, plus blue, black and yellow cyclones. These broke up the petrified wood and the mud pillars, and the cyclones dried out the mud. Next *Bego'chiddy* sent up five *Nastol disse*, Dust Devils, who trimmed the rock pillars and made holes in them.¹² Five little whirlwinds then spread out the stones. The storms all returned to the Third World and *Lukatso* began to grow until he came up through the hole. The ants came up first and the turkeys last. *Bego'chiddy* then pulled *Lukatso* up through the hole, and then dropped him back into the Third World as he was no longer needed.

After everything was up in the new world the waters of the flood from the previous world began coming through the hole. *Bego'chiddy* blew on the hole but could not close it and the waters kept rising. *Bego'chiddy* then took the baby from under the cloak of *Etsay'hash'keh*, Coyote

¹²The reason for the number five is unknown. It is very unusual. Normally four or its multiples are used.

Man, and threw it down the hole where it landed on the head of its parent, Water Monster. The monster and its baby both sank down to the bottom and the waters retreated back down the hole. *Bego'chiddy* again blew on the hole and it closed.

The people (Includes animal people) were wet and cold, but they had no fire with which to dry out. *Etsay'hash'keh* went to where *Hash'jesh'jin*, Fire God, and *Dontso*, Messenger Fly, were sleeping and stole fire from them to bring back to the people.

Bego'chiddy now wanted to plan how to live and called a council of the gods and the people, but no one had any plans. He knew that their minds had to be purified, so he instructed them to build a sweathouse for purification. Where would they get the wood? He instructed them to ask for wood from *Toháh*, Beaver, stone from *Deh'nozzi*, Mountain Sheep, and water from *Tabastéen etahdah*, Daughter of Otter, and fire from *Dontso*, Messenger Fly. When the people returned with the material *Bego'chiddy* built the sweathouse roof of four Rainbows covered with Robe of Darkness. A door was fashioned from a flashing robe from *Nasuah'hastéen*, Owl.

After stones had been heated in the fire they were carried inside the sweathouse and all the people and gods went in except *Bego'chiddy*, *Hash'jesh'jin*, *Etsay'hash'keh* and the women. They all sang. Then they came out and rubbed themselves with earth. Afterward they returned to the sweathouse where Locust sang them a song about coming into this world. Again they came out and washed themselves with water from a bowl placed there by Daughter of Otter. Again all returned to the sweathouse.

This time they planned the creation. First they planned to make the mountains: *Siss'nah'jini*, Holy Mountain of the East; *Tsoll'tsith*, Holy Mountain of the South, *Nata'has'eh*, Mountain South of Zuni;

Dogo' slée' ed, Holy Mountain of the West, San Francisco Peaks; *Deben' tsah*, Holy Mountain of the North, La Plata; *Tsilth' nah' ot' z'ithly*, Huerfano Mountain; and *Johl' één*, Pedernal Peak. Then they planned the rivers: *Toh' bakahni*, San Juan; and *Toh' baad*, Rio Grande. The first was male, the second, female. After this they planned a lake, *Hajéénah*, to cover the place where the Emergence occurred. This was near Silverton, Colorado. After this they planned more mountains, including *Tsilth' ran' es' tséel*, Bright Shining Mountain, on Santa Cruz Island, California. They also planned the Sun, *Johonah' eh*; the moon, *Klayonah' eh*; and the Morning and Evening Star, *Sontso*. After this the months were planned.¹³

Following this planning session the gods and people came out of the sweathouse and built a new hogahn (hogan, hoghan) or rainbows, *Hodayeh*, for *Kay' des' tizhi*, Wrapped in a Rainbow. All six of the former gods, *Kay des tizhi*, the *Yeh* gods, and all the chiefs went inside to sit on the robes provided while they held a council. Here they sang "*Nahtéen Odolith*," Beginning of World Song. The spirits of all things to be created were in the hogahn, too. *Hash' jesh' jin* brought in the sun, moon, stars and light. People brought in other things. Models of everything were made on the floor and the spirits of everything were put into the models. *Hash' jesh' jin* and his brother, *Choostaig*,¹⁴ put their spirits into the stars and the mountains.

¹³The inclusion of *Natah' has' eh*, the Zuni Sacred Mountain in this initial planning is interesting. It helps illustrate the borrowing which took place from the Pueblos. *Tsilth' ran' es' tseel* later becomes the home of Sun and Changing Woman.

¹⁴*Choostaig* is not mentioned earlier. It is not known if he was from an earlier world or from the Fourth World.

Etsay' *hastéen*, First Man, and *Etsa'* *assun*, First Woman, had the Spirit of Sickness and threatened the people with it if they did wrong. The *Yeh* gods were appointed to watch over the people and protect them.

Now the gods created the Spirit of the Earth, *Nakastsan'* *be' estéen*, and the Spirit of the Sky, *Yaah'* *dilthklithy'* *be' estéen*. Whenever Mother Earth and Father Sky are pictured together in a dry painting their mouths should always be linked together and they should be holding hands to show that they must work together.

The holy mountains of the four directions were now dressed; the east mountain in white shell beads and a white shell helmet, the south mountain in turquoise, though it wanted the white shell, the west mountain in abalone with a blanket of yellow light and a small abalone shell in its mouth, and the north mountain was dressed in jet and given a blanket of night blackness and covered with all game animals. The south mountain was not well behaved; it kept moving and sliding,¹⁵ so the gods placed malpais all around it to hold it in place. *Etsay'* *hash'keh*, Coyote Man, claimed it for his own.

The Sun was now made of fire with a rainbow around it and was given the Spirit of Turquoise Man. The Moon was made of ice with a rainbow around it and given the Spirit of White Shell Man. Fall and Winter were made and placed in the north and west. Spring and Summer were made and placed in the south and east. October was given to Coyote Man upon his insistence. It is the Changing Month and is half yellow and half white.

The other stars were now all put into place. Coyote Man was given one, Antares, which is still known as the coyote star. He also stole a

¹⁵ Mt. Taylor is an extinct volcano.

number of smaller stars and flung them at random into the sky, and *Bego'chiddy* permitted it. Because all the world was now ready, forty-eight *Niholtso*, Cyclones, were made to hold up the earth, twelve in each of the four directions.

Bego'chiddy now waved *Ethkay nah ashi* (one of the twins he had made in the Second World who had been killed by *Hash'jesh'jin* and restored to life by *Bego'chiddy*), Spirit of Life, over the whole creation and it came to life. People's eyes would not move. This was because of the mother-in-law prohibition.¹⁶

Earth, Sun, Sky and Moon also would not move. People wondered why this was and were worried. Coyote said that it was necessary for someone to die first before they could come to life. *Etsay'dass'alini* died, and the people's eyes and all other things that had been unmovable began to move. Everyone then questioned where the dead man had gone. *Bego'chiddy* investigated and found him in the Third World brushing his hair. More will be said regarding death and the end of man in Chapter VIII. The second man died several days later. *Bego'chiddy* found him in heaven. While he was in heaven, he created his son, *Begoth'kai*, and brought him back down to earth.

Begoth'kai spoke to the people and gave them directions where they should live. He directed them to move to *Nah tee'tseel* where there were four mountains in a row. After this both he and his father went back to heaven.

Shortly after this Monsters began to appear and to trouble the people. Many people were killed and eaten. The four gods who lived

¹⁶No explanation is given as to why the prohibition of a son-in-law talking to his mother-in-law would cause this.

at Huerfano Mountain, First Man, First Woman, Salt Woman and Coyote Man, traveled about in a cloud to escape detection by the Monsters. *Bego' chiddy* looked down from heaven and saw the problems the people were having. He made a magic flute into which the other four gods climbed. He then gathered two of every living thing into the flute with the gods and transported them all to a cave in the mountains north of San Francisco Peaks. First Man, First Woman, Coyote Man and Salt Woman all climbed into the magic flute and flew back to Huerfano Mountain. Around the area of the mountain they saw many *Yehtso' lapai*.

Bego' chiddy asked the four gods in the flute if they were lonely. When they answered that they were he told them that that night he would show them something. When they looked out that night they saw a star shining over *Johl' éen* Peak, Pedernal. *Hashje' altye*, Talking God, went to investigate. He found a new baby girl. *Bego' chiddy* said it was the child of Earth Spirit and Sky Spirit. The gods took her home with them, and when she was about sixteen they held a puberty ceremony. At the close of the ceremony, as she lay on a robe, she began growing older and older. Then she began growing younger again. From that time on she could grow older and then younger. The gods named her *Estsan' ah' tlehay*, Changing Woman. She is the spirit of the seasons of the earth.

Some time later Sun saw her as he was passing overhead and mated with her. Six months later she gave birth to twin sons, the hero twins of the Monster Slaying Myth. More will be said of them in Chapter IX, Sin and Soteriology; their trip to the west to meet their father, the armor they received, the return home and the slaying of the Monsters.

Twelve days after the slaying of the last monster, *Bego' chiddy* came down from heaven and visited together with the other five former

gods in the Mirage Hoghan, *Hadahonestéen*. Here they planned the destruction of the earth to purify it. It began to rain and rained for forty-two days. It covered the world for another forty-two days, all except the mountain tops. *Bego' chiddy* rode in the sky above the flood on a Rainbow. He made all the water to run off the earth. Then he waved his hands at Huerfano Mountain and everything was replanted. Then he sent rain so it would grow.

Bego' chiddy and the other gods now met in Mirage Hoghan again. This time it was to plan more people and more animals. First *Bego' chiddy* made three men and three women. Then all the gods combined to make more men and more animals. These people were all called, Made of Everything, *Anlthtahn' nah' olyah*. The others who had come up from the lower worlds were called Emergence People, *Hajee nah' diné*. Things were different now since the flood. Everyone now spoke different languages, and they cut their hair differently. The Navajo wore theirs long and tied back while the Pueblos all cut theirs short and straight across the forehead.

Estsa assun, First Woman warns that wars will now start.

Shortly after this Sun tells Changing Woman that he wants her to move to the west, to Santa Barbara Island. The other gods do not want her to go, but when *Bego' chiddy* comes down from heaven he told her to go. Accounts of her trip westward will be made in the next chapter, The Latter Gods; and, because of the people who were made along the way and those created on Santa Barbara Island, more will be said in Chapter VIII, Man, His Origin and Destiny.

Bego' chiddy now began the making of Clans, and sent the people out in different directions. Coyote took some people from the last group made and two dogs and left for the North. These people were called the

Diné nahóó' lonai, the Eskimo. After this *Bego' chiddy* created two more gods, *Bego' zhoni* and *Bego' tso*, but no one has ever seen them. Some of the people who were created in the West now came back. They were welcomed and given places to live.

Bego' chiddy now assembled the people for the learning of all the ceremonies and all the songs. When all these had been learned he went up to heaven to stay. Before he left, he said that some day the world would be destroyed by flood or fire or cyclone, and then he would come again. According to one Chantway he has reappeared at least once since that time.¹⁷

According to this Myth, the *Hahdenigai-Hunai*, it has been fairly easy to ascertain the former, or earlier, gods, and to describe what they did. It has been necessary in tracing their work to bring in references to the latter gods and the present gods, as well as incorporating a portion of what is properly the doctrine of man.

According to the *Hanelth' nayhe* Myth it is much more difficult to establish the deities and the order in which they appear. Especially is this true in trying to draw a fine line of distinction between the divine and the semi-divine characters. No council of gods appears in the first world according to this myth. Also, there are five worlds rather than four. A Red World, red being the color of evil, has been added after the First, the Black World. This is done because of the essentially evil nature of the inhabitants of the lower worlds.

The present writer is convinced, though it would be impossible to prove it, that the *Hanelth' nayhe* Myth is older than the *Hadenigai-Hunai* Myth. Some of the reasons for his convictions are now set forth.

¹⁷Mary C. Wheelwright, Hail Chant and Water Chant, (Santa Fe: Museum of Navajo Ceremonial Art, 1946), p. 15.

The beginning of things with the existence of insect life as the *Hanelth'nayhe* does is much more consistent with Zuni and Apache myth, the Apache being a good check group as they were originally part of the same people as the Navajo. While the *Hadenigai* Myth also has the ants in the First World, they are the result of creation by *Bego'chiddy*. It would appear that *Bego'chiddy* in this myth is patterned after the God of the Christian as the Creator. His appearance in this myth is also strange in that he is described as having yellow hair and blue eyes. His son, *Begoth'kai*, is pictured as having pale skin, but black hair and black eyes, even as Christ was colored so in many of the early crucifixes. It is known that the Navajo loitered around the edges of the pueblos, and they must have picked up some of the religious expressions as well as other cultural items from the Spanish and the Christian Pueblos.

The *Hadenigai* Myth also has a copy of Satan rebelling against God in the rebellion of *Hash'jesh'jin* against *Bego'chiddy* on the fourth day in the First World. It repeats this rebellious attitude, an attitude of jealousy, in the Second World when he wants to kill the twins that *Bego'chiddy* had made. This could be seen as a distortion of the temptation of man with man's consequent fall into sin and death. When the rebellion against *Bego'chiddy* takes place, *Hash'jesh'jin* sets the First World on fire and it becomes known as the Burning Pitch Place. When to this is added the threat later in the Myth that those who do evil will go to this place at the time of death, the Biblical concept of Hell can be seen.

The account of the flood in the Fourth World in the *Hadenigai* Myth has too close a parallel with the flood account in Genesis in the choice of numbers. The Bible speaks of rain for forty days, the myth, of rain

for forty-two days. Two of every living thing had been saved earlier by being placed in the magic flute and transported to the cave.

In the *Hanelth'nayhe* Myth, as well as in several other variants, *Bego'chiddy* is a minor being, simply designated as the bearer of Moon. Throughout the *Hadenigai*, however, he has a position of prominence, capped by his announcement when he left the world to go to heaven the last time that he would return one day to destroy it. A number of other examples could be made, or, at least questions asked about similarities.

Surely, there can be little doubt that the Navajo in their borrowing of religion from others borrowed also from Christianity. Most of this was probably done during the days of the Spanish occupation of the Pueblos, but some may well have come from around 1900 with the advent of many Protestant missionaries on the Navajo Reservation, for the Navajo can, and does, easily compress hundreds of years of history into one paragraph with no apparent time lapse.

It should be readily apparent already, and become even more so, in this study of the doctrine of god in Navajo theology, that there is an ambivalence about the Navajo deities. They are neither all good nor all evil usually, but may react either with good or with evil toward mankind. Fire God commits the first sin by rebelling against another god, *Bego'chiddy*. Coyote Man may either get man into trouble by his tricks, or he may be a ready helper of man. The same is true of the divine beings in the *Hanelth'nayhe*, where First Man answers an accusation by saying that evil is not wrong itself, but that depends on how the evil is used.

Some concept of the *Hanelth'nayhe* Myth may better be had, perhaps by drawing out some of the progression of events in the emergence. This

is done on the next two pages. Some commentary will then be made on the appearance of the Former Gods according to this Rite.

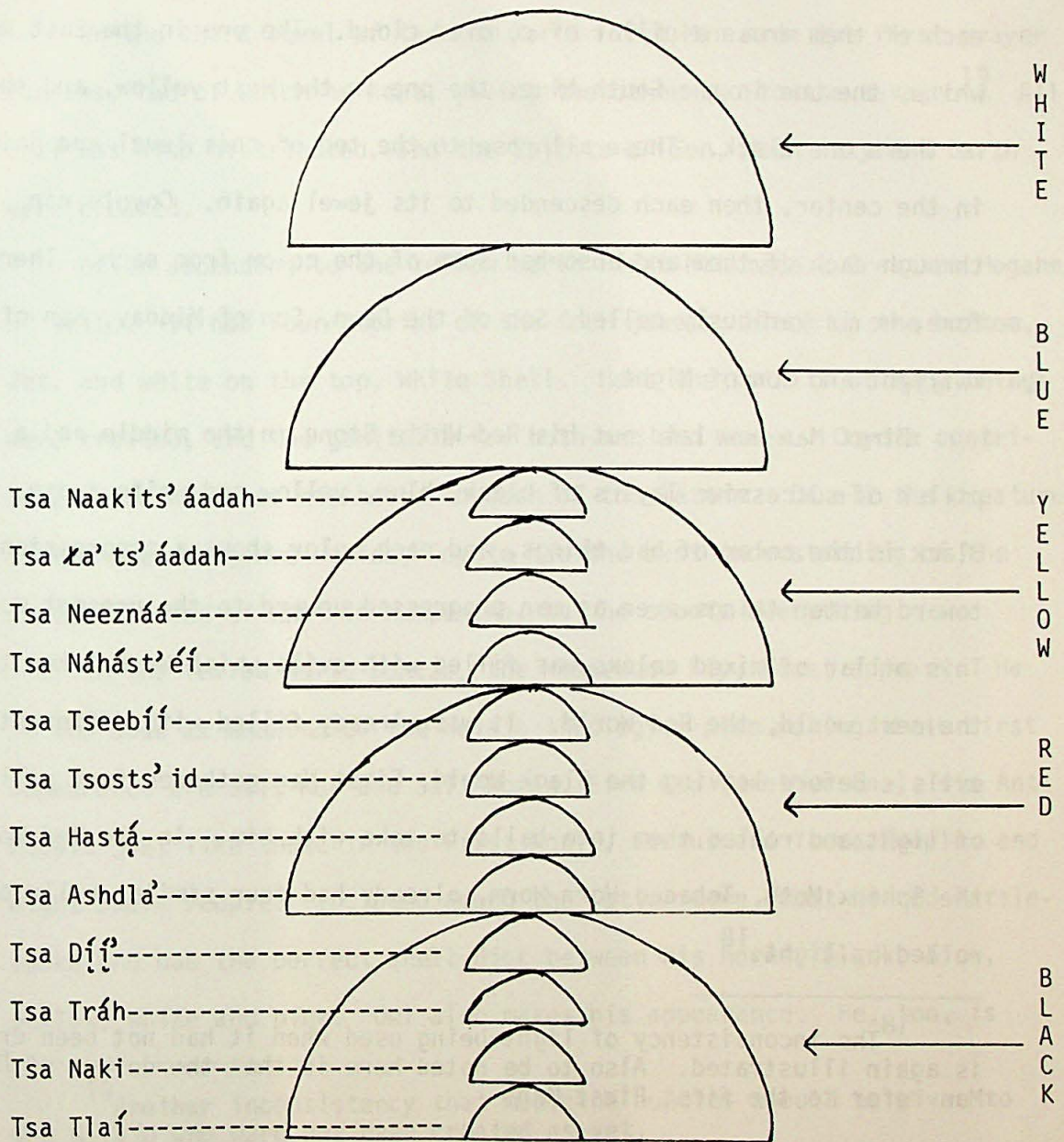
In the *Hanelth'nayhe* Rite confusion, to the Western world, is even more pronounced than in the *Haderigai-Hunai* Rite. It is probably the more accepted rite for most Navajo, and it has more variants. Sometimes the stories in each of the first three worlds are spoken of as worlds, and there is less distinction between the divine and the semi-divine personages. The term Holy People is used rather indiscriminately for the animal and people beings as well as for the gods, though the latter are a recognized separate group, but not necessarily the motivating forces behind creation and emergence.

The major differences between the Rites are found in the Pre-Emergence events, especially in the period prior to the world preceding this world. The events in the Blue World and in this world are approximately the same.

If there is a prime mover in the *Hanelth'nayhe* Rite it is First Man, and his power and desires are primarily evil, rather than good as was the case with *Bego'chiddy*. However, First Man does not even appear upon the scene immediately in the First World, the Black World. In this world the first beings were nine people, of whom six were ants and three were beetles.

Each of the first three worlds was divided into four stories. These stories, progressively, were named First Speech, Second Speech, Third Speech, etc. These nine insect people found the first story, or First Speech, very inhospitable; therefore, they climbed to the second story, or level, where they met two locust people. On the way up to this level, Beet Beetle, the Pot Carrier, forgot his pots and had to go back for

COLUMN OF THE FIVE WORLDS
OF THE
HANELTH' NAYHE MYTH



them. This is why men are forgetful even today. This level and the next were equally inhospitable. On the fourth level were found nine people; two First Men, two First Women, First Made Man, Second Made Man, First Boy and First Girl, and, First Scolder, Coyote. Fire God was also here.

First Man laid out the four sacred Jewels, White Shell in the East, Turquoise in the South, Abalone in the West, and Jet in the North. From each of them arose a pillar of colored cloud. The one in the East was white, the one in the South blue, the one in the West yellow, and the northern one black. These all rose to the top of this level and joined in the center, then each descended to its jewel again. Coyote ran through each of them and absorbed some of the color from each. Therefore, he is variously called, Son of the Dawn, Son of Midday, Son of Twilight and Son of Night.

First Man now laid out his Red-White Stone in the middle and a pillar of successive layers of black, blue, yellow and white arose. Black is the color of bad things, and each color shows a pregression toward better things even as man progressed upward to the present world. This pillar of mixed colors was filled with evils which were taken to the next world, the Red World. It was already filled with different evils. Before leaving the Black World, First Man gathered four pillars of light and rolled them into balls to take with him. In the Red World the Sphinx Moth, Tobacco Horn Worm, already had four similar balls of rolled up light.¹⁸

¹⁸The inconsistency of light being used when it had not been created is again illustrated. Also to be noted here is that the doings of First Man refer to the first First Man.

After meeting the Sphinx Moth on the first level of the Second World, all progressed to the next level where all the Feline People lived, plus Wolf, Badger, Fox, Spider Man and Spider Woman. All of them were evil and fought with each other with arrows. First Man conquered all of them, killing many, and then rostering them to life after exacting sacred songs from each group as payment.

On the third level of the Red World First Man made the first prayer bundles, two of which he kept, giving the other two to the Navajo.¹⁹ All evil was also distributed, and the Spirits of Sun, Moon, Sky and Earth were created.

After ascending to the Yellow World First Man made a Creation Hogahn of white. It had four stories of the four jewels, black on the bottom, Jet, and white on the top, White Shell. Here the spirits of many things were created, and the genitalia for both men and women. Coyote contributed four hairs of his beard to each of the latter. Of all the creatures in the pre-emergence worlds, Coyote has the best understanding of the ceremonies and of what is happening, but he spoofs everything.

In the Yellow World *Dontso*, the Messenger Fly, first appears. He is the *deus ex machina* of the Navajo theology. Also making their first appearance are Salt Man and Salt Woman, Fire God (another one), six Ant People just like those in the First World, Cactus and Yucca People, and eight Snake People. Included among the latter were Great Horned Rattlesnake who has the perfect shell disk between his horns, black, blue, yellow, white and pink. Owl also makes his appearance. He, too, is

¹⁹Another inconsistency that medicine bundles should be given to the Navajo who were not even created as yet.

evil. In this Yellow World First Man says that there is a time to use evil and a time not to use it.

After the ascent into the Blue World this myth closely parallels the account in the *Hadenigai* Myth.

In concluding this chapter, a statement by Father Berard Haile²⁰ that inconsistencies of the myths and the gods are no inconsistencies to the Navajo at all, is in order. They simply accept the statements. This should be born in mind for the remainder of the study also.

²⁰Fr. Berard Haile, Head And Face Masks In Navaho Ceremonialism, (St. Michaels, Ariz.: St. Michaels Press, 1947), p. 6.

CHAPTER V

THE LATTER GODS

It was stipulated that the designation, The Latter Gods, was used in the sense of those who appeared in Navajo Myth later than the First World. This is, of course, according to the *Hadenigai-Hunai* Myth of the Emergence. It was shown in the last chapter how difficult it was to develop an orderly structure of the pantheon of Navajo deities according to the *Hanelth'nayhe* Myth. Some references to the latter myth will be made.

There are particular difficulties with this portion of the doctrine of god. One of these is that one referred to in the preceding paragraph. Another difficulty is in reaching a decision as to how to group them. Another difficulty is found in different spellings of a name, to say nothing of different names themselves. Yet another is the difficulty of making decisions whether certain deities mentioned in the various Ways are indeed deities not mentioned elsewhere, or if these are simply different names for a deity previously mentioned under another name.

It is necessary, first of all, to remember that Navajo thinking and western Christian thinking are not at all alike. What is no problem for them may be a major problem for Lutheran systematic theology. Some discrepancies are simply going to remain. As nearly as possible these deities will be grouped in five different categories; deities mentioned as such, holy people, spirits of various natural things, animal and bird personifications as deities, and evil deities.

Sometimes variant spellings will be listed, but not always. This is so in part because the writer is not aware of all variants that might exist. Another reason is that in some cases the variants are either not found often, or are minute in nature. Different names of the same deity will be mentioned if these are major characters. Two instances of a special nature will be dealt with at some length. These instances are two different deities in each case who, in one sense, are entirely different characters with different roles to play, and in another sense, are identical. The variant spellings mentioned will not take into consideration cases where the phonetic alphabet was used by some writers.

According to the writer's opinion of whether deities are major or minor a description of the activities of these deities may or may not be given. Many, in fact, nearly all, of these deities also belong to the category of the next chapter, The Present Gods, those considered still active today. At that time an entirely different treatment will be given the deities mentioned.

From this treatment it is hoped that the reader will be able to obtain a bit of an understanding of the complexity of the Navajo doctrine of god. It is also hoped that he will begin to appreciate some of the problems faced by a Christian trying to proclaim his message to a people involved in such a theological system.

Deities Called Such

Kay'des'tighi was the first god made by one of the former gods. The name is also spelled *Kay'des'tizhi*, and, according to the *Hanelth'nayhe*, has the name *Nadleh*. The god is an hermaphrodite, both male and female. The first name given means "wrapped in a Rainbow." It was made

by *Bego'chiddy* in the First World, and on several occasions had a special hoghan built for it. It was these hoghans which were then used for council rooms. In the Third World when the men and women were separated from each other by the gods, *Kay des tighi* went with the men and taught them proper agriculture. This incident will be dealt with in Chapters VIII and IX.

Three god sons of *Bego'chiddy* are mentioned as being made by him in the Fourth World. The first was *Begoth'kai*. He came down from heaven on one occasion and told the people where they should move to, but has not been seen again. The other two, *Bego'tso* and *Bego'jin*, are never seen. The latter name is also spelled *Bego'zhini* and *Bego'tsini*. The *Hanelth'nayhe* Myth uses these three names, plus that of *Bego'chiddy*, for the same character. To that god is relegated the minor role of Bearer of the Moon.

Yeh'nez and three other *Yeh* are mentioned as the gods created especially for the Zuni. In the last chapter their Zuni names were given and their importance in the *Shalako* festival. Many Navajo attend the Zuni *Shalako* festival. Numerous other gods are mentioned as having been created for the various other Indian tribes, but they are not normally given names. The god of the Americans is not named, but the Myth states that when *Est'san'ah'tlehay*, Changing Woman, created a number of people in the West she blew some across the ocean to live, and "one of them became the god of the Americans."

Klish'tso, Greated Horned Rattlesnake, is more than an animal personification and is specifically given the designation of "*hashje*," or god. He is the controller of power, a power which is many times evil. He is used in numerous sandpaintings and mentioned often in prayers and chants.

Tone'lili, Water Bearer or Water Sprinkler, is known as the Gray God. He is one of the featured gods in the Night Chantway, and more will be said of this in the next chapter. He is the clown among the gods.

Hashje'altye, Talking God, is also called the *Yei'bi'chei*, or Grandfather of the *Yei*. He was one of those responsible for removing the first waters from off the surface of the Fourth World. He is also found taking part in the discussions of the gods on the creation of men and the rebuilding of the Fourth World. He assumes a leading role also in the Night Chantway.

Hasteje'hoghan, House God, is also one of the four gods first found on the Fourth World who helped remove the waters. He, too, sat in on planning councils in the ordering of the creation of things for the Fourth World.

Be'ganiskiddy, also found simply as *Gar'eskiddi*, the Seed Bearer, was the god found on the south of the Fourth World and was one of the water removers. By the same name on the north he was known as Mountain Sheep God. As one individual he took part in the councils on replanting the earth after the flood and repopulating it with animals.

Tsa'holdolza, Fringe Mouth God, has very little said of him other than a comment of his being in various places, and is involved in the Nightway Chant. The same holds true of *Ha das'tsisi*, Whipping God. Sporting events are controlled by companion gods, *Hashje'eltsi* and *Hashje'oltoi*, who taught the people in the last world to play games. One is male, one female.

Tiehol'tsodi, Water Monster, controls the floods. It was the child of this god that was stolen by Coyote Man in the last world and caused

the flood which inundated that world. There are numerous separate Water Monsters who control various rivers and lakes, but these will not be mentioned.

Another pair of gods are the male and female Rainbow, *Natséel* and *Natséel'it*, the god or goddess of protection, well being or harmony. In sandpaintings it is normally the female who surrounds the picture on three sides. *Asheen'assun*, Salt Woman, was mentioned among the former gods. One of the first Navajo clans was named after her. Later in the Myth, *Asheen'hastéen*, Salt Man is also mentioned.

Choost'aigi, God of Darkness, is the counterpart of the former god, *Hash'jesh'jin*, God of Fire. One brings light and warmth, the other darkness and cold. The two are, however, in some chantways treated as simply the two sides of one god. It would indicate that fire is thought of as both good and evil. The two of them live down in the Third (fourth) World.

Three gods who are close co-workers are sometimes thought of as personifications. They are *Iknee*, Thunder, *Nihltsi*, Wind, and *N'dlohe*, Hail. All are given the reference, *hashje*, gods. All three are also either sub-divided, assigned local tasks, or are actually separate entities as spirits according to color, direction or locale. They will be briefly treated under the sub-division of this chapter, Spirits.

Two other deities who fall into this category of being in one sense personifications, but in another sense are "true gods," are *Nastse'estsan*, Spider Woman, and *Nastse'hastéen*, Spider Man. The former especially helps various myth hero characters escape disaster.

Yet another deity of this type is Horned Toad Man. The horned toads then are often pictured in sandpaintings. Horned Toad Man is

considered especially efficacious in pregnancies. Supposedly a horned toad can give birth to young while running. Therefore, with the help of Horned Toad Man it will be an easy delivery for a woman.

It is difficult to place, *Dontso*, Messenger Fly. He is not actually called *hashje*, god, but the messenger of the gods. He is not the personification of the flies either. Therefore, his name is included here.

Holy People

Etsay' *Hastéen*, First Man, and *Esta'* *Assun*, First Woman, were treated as former gods in the previous chapter, but they sometimes have the designation of *Digénneh*, or Holy People, not only according to the *Hanelth'nayhe* Rite, but also according to the *Hadenigai* Rite. Others who are ascribed this title are *Est'san'natah*, Head Woman, the first mother-in-law; *Etsay hasléen*, First Made Man, the first son-in-law; *Astra'geh*, Center Man; *Adageh'hasléen*, Behind Man; and *Eakah'kestrah-hasléen*, Fourth Made Man. These four were all created by *Bego'chiddy* in the Third World as prototypes for future people, and some present day people are their descendents. Female counterparts by the same names were also created at the same time.

Etsan'ah'tlehay, Changing Woman, and *Yolkai'estsan*, White Shell Woman, are in essentially the same relationship to each other as are Fire God and God of Darkness. She was mentioned in the previous chapter according to the former name. She was the child of Earth Spirit and Sky Spirit, or, Mother Earth and Father Sky. She was found by some of the Former Gods and raised by two of them, First Man and First Woman. Both major myth motifs agree on this. According to the *Hanelth'nayhe*, however, First Man and First Woman being corrupt tried to raise her the

same way, but she remained apart and was good. One of the Wind Spirits had warned her that they were not her real parents. She was born about the time the Monsters were becoming a real problem on earth.

After four days she was grown, and after twelve, or sixteen, days she was fully grown. The Puberty Ceremony was held for her. At the conclusion, as she was lying on a robe in the hogan she began growing older and older, and then began to grow younger and younger until she was at her proper age again. At this time, she was named and became the symbol of the changing seasons of the year.

One day Sun passing overhead was smitten by her and mated with her. Six months later she bore twin sons. They will be the next Holy People discussed. After they were grown and had slain all the Monsters, Sun demanded that she come to the West to live with him in his hogan on Santa Clara Island. It was there that she began making more people and established the first four Clans.

Changing Woman is one of the most important personages of the Navajo religion, but the web of myth is extremely confusing. According to some of the stories she was the child of the spirit of the Moon and the spirit of the Water. Thus she becomes the sex symbol of the religion also. In other versions it was her sister, or in some the wife of the Moon, who was born so. She is then called *Yolkai'estsan*, White Shell Woman. According to one variant, White Shell Woman was angry with people and gave birth to a monster daughter, Snapping Vagina, born out of White Shell Woman's incestuous relation with her father, or uncle, Moon. Snapping Vagina then gave birth to the Monsters who were to destroy man. In other versions the monsters were the offspring of the miscegenation

of the women in the Third World with various animals when they were separated from the men.

What appears to be the real object of the stories, regardless of how told, is that the two personages represent the two sides of nature. One, Changing Woman, might be called Mother Nature, and is representative of the higher principle of nature. The other, White Shell Woman, represents the purely reproductive aspect of nature, which if unchecked, runs wild and produces all manner of aberrations.

The twin hero sons of Changing Woman, *Nayen ez gani*, the Monster Slayer, and *Toh bach itsin*, Born of Water, are the savior figures of the Navajo myths. Some hold that the former was the child of Sun and the latter the child of Moon. The moon has the controlling influence over water as evidenced by tides. Their "life story" will be told in the chapter on "Sin and Soteriology."

Various other characters of the Navajo panorama of religion might be included in this section. Some of these would be Corn Pollen Boy and Corn Pollen Girl, and Corn Beetle. Actually, for Corn Pollen Boy and Girl there are four of each according to the colored corn of the four directions, black, blue, yellow and white.

These are the major figures of the Holy People as the designation has been made here. All of them still figure in either/or the myth tale and/or the sandpaintings of most of the present day Chantways.

Spirits of Various Natural Things

Virtually everything in nature has its own spirit. The spirits were created by the gods, or, in some instances just appeared, before the natural objects were ever created in this the Fourth (Fifth or

Twelfth) World. They are important in the pantheon of the Present Gods to be treated in the next chapter, for they have a day to day effect upon the individual Navajo. It would be impossible to list them all, or even to give an estimated total of their number.

Each of the holy mountains has its own spirit. The sun has, for example, the spirit of Turquoise Man. The spirit of Fire God, not to be confused with Fire God himself, is the spirit put into most of the stars. Earth, sky, water and air each have their own spirits. *Nihltsi*, Wind God, has all kinds of winds under his control, each of which has its own spirit. These may, by a partial listing, serve as well as any illustration of the complexities of analyzing the spirit realm.

Wind Spirits

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Old Man Wind | Winds of Direction |
| Old Woman Wind | a) Black Wind - East |
| Little Winds of Yucca Mountain | b) Blue Wind - South |
| Left-handed Wind | c) Yellow Wind - West |
| Right-handed Wind | d) White Wind - North |
| Old Man Big Wind (Cyclone) | Whirlwind |
| Red Wind | Wind Boy - son of Whirlwind |
| Gray Wind | Striped Wind |
| Crazy Wind | Backward-facing Wind |

How many wind spirits there are cannot be determined. To a lesser degree the same holds true of lightning, hail and thunder. No useful purpose, as far as this study is concerned, would be served by other listings.

Animal And Bird Personifications

As a general rule of thumb, the first animal or bird created of a species, or sub-species, is personified, deified and capitalized. In many instances they are then employed in the sandpaintings also. In each instance they appear to embody either the best or the worst of the

species. They also tend to hold high rank. Wolf and Mountain Lion, for instance, were appointed by *Bego'chiddy* to be chiefs of the animals in the Third World, and Oriole and Mockingbird were to be chiefs of the birds. According to the *Hanelth'nayhe* Myth the first divine beings were insects, of whom Dark-Red Ant, Red Ant, Yellow-Black Ant and Stag Beetle were the chiefs.

Some achieve a particular prominence by being go-betweens for the gods and men, but no particular value would be derived by belaboring the point at this place.

Evil Deities

First Man and First Woman are often categorized by their evil, though they have been listed in this study under the deities who have the name of god. The same would hold true of Fire God and God of Darkness. Coyote Man is frequently associated with evil. Two of the semi-divine beings were associated only with evil, though they have now been destroyed. These were Snapping Vagina of whom mention has been made, and *Tontso*.

Tontso was the first of the Monsters to begin killing mankind in this world. He lived near Mt. Taylor. He is called the son of Sun. The other Monsters of that period are referred to as pets of the Sun. He was given the designation of *Yeh tso*, the Giant *Yei*.

Great Horned Rattlesnake has much evil and is feared. If a shaman believes his "medicine" good he may employ some of the chants and prayers of the great Snake in his healing ceremony. But it is dangerous.

There is no personal devil as such. The various supernaturals all have both a good and an evil side. Some are more inclined to good, others are rather neutral, while some, such as those mentioned above,

are essentially evil. Some would believe that all of the First Holy People were evil.

Evil is worshipped and used primarily in "witching" as the next chapter illustrates. The intervention of the deities is then sought to counteract this evil; in some instances, using the evil of the gods to counteract evil, in other instances using the good offices of the gods to overcome the evil.

Though these are all the gods, yet at times Navajo theology has more the aspect of a dichotomy, that is, that there are two principles, or powers, one good and one evil. These are always in conflict with each other.

In the Myths there is not always an orderly progression of the deities, nor is there anywhere a complete listing. Many of them are simply mentioned suddenly with a given situation without any mention of where they progressed from, nor when.

CHAPTER VI

THE PRESENT GODS

Who are the present gods? What are their functions? The answers would appear to furnish also a summary of the doctrine of god in Navajo theology. It is at this point that the Chantways must come in for the closest scrutiny, not for their ceremonialism itself, but for the story that is told of the gods and men in the healing rite being performed.

The Christian is accustomed to having his God give him instructions from the Bible in how he is to live and what he is to do or not to do, coupled with a history of mankind as it either follows these directions or rebels against them. It is predicated upon the story in the opening chapters of the first book of the Bible of the creation of the world and of mankind. It always shows the failure of mankind, after the fall into sin, to keep these directions. The results of the failure to keep these directions, that which the Bible calls sin, are the threats of God to punish that sin by death, both temporal and eternal. Then the Bible shows the other side of God, the side of his love for a mankind that is sinful and cannot save itself. It provides the news of salvation, and how that salvation may be obtained through faith in Christ, the Son of God, who perfectly keeps the Law for mankind and also suffers and dies for the sins committed by mankind to provide expiation of those sins.

In contrast, the Navajo is accustomed to having his gods give him instructions through the oral recitations of myths which relate the story

of the evolvement of this world and mankind through a successive series of tribulations. The Navajo myths do not begin with a perfect world or with perfect gods. Both gods and men have elements of good and elements of evil. The myths also point out mankind's failure to measure up to what is expected of him. Death, temporal only, is the usual end result of this failure. But often the death is reversed and life restored through the use of magical elements by men and/or by the proper employment of songs, prayers, offerings and paintings. The purpose behind these things is to restore harmony between an individual and the supernatural power offended. It is for this purpose that the ceremonials, or Chantways, are conducted. Chantways may be of two types, and each one can be done according to either type, one, the type against evil, *Hochojii*, the other for blessing, *Hozhojii*. The love of the gods is shown only if man follows the proper ritual and offering.

The basic design of every major Chantway is a general recitation of the Emergence Myth, sometimes beginning in the previous world, and sometimes beginning at the point of the emergence into the present world. Depending on the nature of the illness, the particular Way then follows the classic pattern of a hero or heroine either being kept from a series of misadventures or in being revived from them. This is accomplished by having one or more of the Supernaturals give them the proper magic, or the proper prayers, paintings and songs to avoid misfortune, or to be restored after having suffered it. Necessary elements of the Chantways also are the use of emetics, sweatbaths, sandpaintings, chants, prayers, offerings.

In the total use of the Chantways all the gods of the Navajo are involved yet today: the *haschje*, gods; the *dinégeh*, holy people; animal

and bird gods; and spirits of the whole of creation in its various components. Each Chantway has the particular deities invoked or involved in that healing or protective device. No one of them contains all the deities. None of the Former Gods appears in any of the sandpaintings with the exception of *Hash'jesh'jin*, Fire God, in his counterpart, *Choost'aigi*, God of Darkness. Most of the gods are not portrayed by dance impersonators either, but the gods are all still at work, one way or another, with the few exceptions of those who have not gone up to heaven.

The writer felt that one of the easiest and best ways to illustrate the situation would be by a synopsis of one of the major Chantways. It was decided that Windways of the Navajo would be appropriate. This was because of the listing of some of the many winds in the previous chapter, and also because it would help to illustrate the relationship, by the Navajo way of thinking, of such divergent things as snakes, rain, thunder, lightning, cactus, winds, corn pollen people, sun and moon to mention only part of them. This will not be a detailed account of the performance of the Windway itself, but a synopsis of the elements and the story involved.

The synopsis is based upon the work of Leland C. Wyman.¹ His work is based upon the recitations of nine informants, and, therefore, takes into consideration a number of variants. He also compares it to the Chiricahua Apache Windway. No recognition will be made in this synopsis of the individual informants that Professor Wyman quotes, nor of the variants as such according to these sources. To do so would not serve

¹Leland C. Wyman, The Windways of the Navajo, (Colorado Springs: Taylor Museum, 1962).

the purpose of this study, and it would make, or keep, things complex which is being sought in simpler form for the understanding of Navajo theology by the non-Navajo mind.

After the recitation of the Emergence, how much of it told depending on the individual conducting the ceremony, the Windways moves into its own major mythic motifs, some of which it shares with other Ways. The motifs embodied here have the hero shattered by lightning, encountering a toad, on a sky visit, disobeying supernatural injunctions, on a hollow log trip, encountering mummifying woman, in a supernatural marriage, a witch father-in-law, and visits to supernaturals. It then has the classic return home of the hero to teach the ceremonial and his departure to live with the supernaturals. In regard to the latter element, it is in essence a becoming a supernatural on the part of the hero.

With no explanation of who the mother of First Woman was, the myth continues with her giving birth to two more daughters and two sons after First Woman was born. The eldest becomes the hero of the story. One day Talking God (only the English names of the deities will be used in this account) visited the family and gathered the children to play games. Invited to the games were all the Snake People and all the Wind People. The boy hero was told to sit still and watch while they all began a chase game. Four times they circled around the boy, but the fifth time the one being chased ran over a ridge with the others behind him. When they returned the boy was gone.

The classic search for the boy began by the Winds from each direction. His footsteps went to a dark pool and stopped. The Messenger Fly also searched, but on the morning of the fourth day he had not been found. Talking God now arrived after first calling four times. He sent each of

the direction Winds down into the dark pool, but only a strange man was found who scolded them. The four colored Thunders next tried to open the pool and failed. Everyone then gathered in the hoghan of the boy's parents to discuss it. No one knew who said it, but finally someone suggested that God of Darkness would know where the boy was.

A laced bundle was taken to this god, and four times he was asked about the boy with no response. Another bundle was added and taken back to the god with the same results. Four times this happened, the gift being increased each time. No results. The discussions then continued in the hoghan with Old Man Bear sitting on one side of the door and Bullsnake on the other. The voice talking about the God of Darkness was again heard. It turned out to be Bat who said that he knew the proper offering. When Bat was ridiculed, he stated that he was the only one who knew because he spent his time in darkness.

The people were directed to make up an offering of a dark bow, a fawn skin with hoofs attached, a tobacco pouch with the sun on one side and the moon on the other and with fringe attached, a pipe of jet with a turquoise plug in the bottom, tobacco from the Black Mountain area, and a rock crystal with which to light it.

Next the people were directed to cut a section of reed three finger widths long. It was to be rubbed with snakeweek, painted black, filled with tobacco, and stoppered with cattail pollen. This was a prayerstick. This was all prepared and delivered by First Man to God of Darkness. After some dissension God of Darkness accepted the gift and smoked the pipe, first accusing Bat of betraying his secret. He then was willing to listen to the request to find the missing boy and said he would come over in four days. After being urged to do so that day he finally

consented after the fourth urging. The god arrived at the scene and immediately made a cross over the waters of Black Pool with his cane. Immediately the water all went to the sides and a jet ladder was seen. In the center at the bottom Old Man Big Snake (Great Horned Rattlesnake) was lying. On each of the four sides Big Snakes of the proper color were lying. After four pleadings for the Snakes to give up the boy, God of Darkness started the water on fire. This caused Old Man Big Snake to reveal the boy's location.

Each of the Snakes then claimed that the boy was now grown, that he had been reared within a hoop with a plume, a flint in the center of the hoop. He was raised within a cloud zipped in by Jagged Lightning or Rainbow or Zig Zag Lightning, depending upon which Snake spoke. Each of the clouds, hoops, flints and plumes were a different color to match the direction color of the Snake who spoke. He was actually found inside the cloud on the north side. Returning up the ladder God of Darkness and the boy went to the place from which he had been kidnapped and there sang the proper songs. Black God then left again. Before he did, however, he named the boy, One Who Has His Feet in Pollen.

After that each of the Winds of Direction returned to their proper homes. Shortly thereafter four very tiny creatures came up to the children. They were the Little Winds of Yucca Mountain. After each demanding a jewel, turquoise, jet, abalone and white shell beads, they left, promising to come back and reveal secrets to the children. They returned and played along the ear folds of the children, for they are the children of the Winds of Direction and are that by which men hear. One stayed with the hero to reveal secrets as he came and went.

Shortly the children were again led to the dark pool by the Snakes who planted water plants to entice them. They wanted to try eating the roots of the plants, but as they approached, the plants moved into deeper water. This happened four times. The hero boy then approached quickly and pulled one from the water. After eating the root he found it was sweet. He pulled another and began to eat. His mother and his father did likewise. Suddenly the boy complained of pain in his ankle and then pain all through his insides. The other two did likewise. Then all three became hoarse and developed blurred vision.

After returning to the hogan, they began discussing the strange illness. Little Yucca Mountain Wind that had been placed in hero boy's ear fold told him that he did not think that they should have eaten them, but that Dark Wind would know what to do. The father then made a bundle and took it to the home of Dark Wind who would not even look at it. Four times the man pleaded with him, but to no avail. This was done three more days, each time adding another bundle, but to no avail. Therefore, the father called a council of the Snakes and the Bears. Bull Snake and Bear Man took their accustomed seats on either side of the door. After much talk no decision was reached.

Messenger Fly then arrived and informed them that he knew what the proper sacrifice must be, but first they must give him pay of jet, turquoise, abalone and white shell. After this had been done he informed them that each of the Winds of Direction must be taken an offering. These offerings were to be prayer sticks. Dark Wind's should be black, inserted with tobacco, stoppered with cattail pollen, then a jet, an abalone, a turquoise, a specular hematite, cattail pollen, blue pollen. It was to be finished with a blue bird feather, a white plume (eagle)

a turkey plume, and a cotton cord. (The latter binds the feathers to the prayerstick.) The same was done for the other Winds in order to the south, west and north. The difference being that South Wind received a blue prayer stick with turquoise the chief jewel; West Wind a yellow prayer stick with abalone the chief jewel; North Wind a white prayer stick with white shell bead the chief jewel. The four Little Winds of Yucca Mountain were each to receive similar prayer sticks.

Messenger Fly then warned them not to tell who their informant had been, and left. The prayer sticks were made, delivered, and accepted. The Winds of Direction promised to come in four days, but after being pleaded with four times by the man they agreed to come at once. Black Wind brought with him a medicine bundle which contained parts of the plant eaten: flag root, interior of flag, inner rind of flag, and flag pollen.

While Dark Wind sang over them he applied flag root to their feet, flag interior to their bodies, and inner rind of flag to their heads. Of the pollen he made them a drink. In this way they became whole again. He then warned them that if pain in an ankle or knee occurred it would be caused by flag root. If the inner rind was eaten there would be inflammation of the skin, while pollen would cause heart pain, dizziness and blurred eyesight. He then gave directions for the making of a stew in which the flag was placed at the bottom.

This stew is still made on the last night of the ceremonial to lift food restrictions or to treat the results of having violated them. It is made of mutton from various parts of the sheep's body, a pinch of meat from various game animals, corn, and the roots of various domesticated and wild plants.

After these events the family decided to move their home away from that bad place. They made the new camp at a place called Among the Sumac. They made their hoghan of plants with all the tips downward. A continuous wind began blowing and blew for four days. Then a line of dark clouds formed in the east and grew upward. Another dark cloud grew upward in the west. Dark Cloud was doing it in the east, and in that cloud was He-Rain. In the west it was Dark Mist doing it, and in that cloud was She-Rain. It began to rain. For two days and two nights the He-Rain came, then for two days and nights the She-Rain came until it was unbearable. Messenger Fly came running by, as it was raining so much he couldn't fly. He told them to turn the poles over with the tips up. They did this and the rain quit. The cause of all this was that the other people who were living in this place did not want them to move there. These other people were the Spider People.

Some time after this the boy and his brother were told that they should not visit Black Range (Jemez Mountains), but the boys set out in that direction, the elder carrying a thick black bow and both a thick shafted arrow and a feathered arrow. When it began to rain he decided to take shelter under a thick spruce tree, but as he did, Jagged Lightning struck him because he was carrying the arrows point down. The Little Wind messenger in his ear fold did not even have time to warn him. He completely burst apart and his flesh was scattered in too small a bits to be recognized.

When he did not return home everyone wondered all night where he was. When dawn appeared, *Hashje'altye*, Talking God, the *Yei'bi'chéi*, Grandfather God of the *Yei* appeared after first calling four times. He and the family members went to the Black Range to search. They found

nothing except the lightning struck spruce tree. They had brought with them four unwounded buckskins and every kind of jewel. When it was discovered that Black Ant People inhabited that ridge in the form of people, they decided to send a messenger to inquire.

The messenger was asked if they had chipped jewels of all kinds. Upon receiving an affirmative answer, Black Ant Man told the messenger to have the people make an offering of all of them to the ants of the different directions. When this had been done the ants came down and told the people to spread out an unwounded buckskin on the ground with a turquoise attached between its horns. The ants then scattered out and by sense of smell they found every piece of the body and reassembled it on the buckskin, beginning from the feet upward, but he was not able to move. Messenger Fly then went up above the sky where he gave an offering to Blue Thunder of some jewels.

Messenger Fly then returned to earth where he sang a song over the body which tightened all the parts together. Then he sang another song which caused him to move. Then he sang another song which caused him to sit upright, but the boy still could not breathe well. Messenger Fly went up again above the sky and notified female Blue Thunder and gave her the offering of a turquoise. Blue Thunder said to move away from him and sent Straight Lightning to strike him. Four times it struck him, once from each direction. Then even his ear openings were restored. Dark Wind then, upon the payment of another offering, ran through him again and he was completely restored. Bluebird was notified, and in the form of a man came and touched the ear wax in the boy's ear with a plume and his speech was again perfect.²

²At this point the synopsis will be shortened even more, largely

The next episode involved a Shooting Chant of the female branch which he was warned not to attend, but he did. Twelve maidens were there: two Pinon Jay, two Turtledove, two Bluebird, two Tanager, two Blackbird, and two Spider. He was to sing for them while they ground meal. This was done. Then he said that they should each make a ball of meal and throw it into the air. Whichever ball came down on the *metate* and rolled to him, with that girl he would go home and spend the night. One Spider Maiden was winner. He went home with her where she prepared a beautiful bed for them, but he fell into a sleep. When he awakened everything was rags and the woman was old and ugly. Trying to escape, he could not find his way home until the two Turtle Dove maidens fed him and gave him drink. He was told the next morning to place a turquoise between the horns of Great Horned Rattlesnake which would rear up and carry him along. When it came to earth he shortly met Toad Old Man. Toad hid him under some growing corn, but the old woman found him. She really was Mummifying Woman. Toad said if he beat her in a foot race she could not have the hero. Toad won, all of the latter part taking place at the base of Spider Woman Rock in Canyon de Chelly.

The next mis-adventure was eating roasted deer intestines which had not been cleaned out. Hero then turned into a snake. With the proper placatory offerings he was rescued by Dark Wind, Blue Wind, Yellow Wind, White Wind and Striped Wind.

mentioning only the Holy People involved, for the primary purpose of this chapter has been to point out the magnitude of the number of deities involved in Navajo religious observance today. It is not felt necessary for the purposes of this study to belabor the point with too many pages of material on details of one Chantway, as the study of the chantways was not one of the purposes.

After this he went to another forbidden place where the Whirlwind made him angry. He shot an arrow into Whirlwind who then twisted him down into the ground until only his head was above ground. This time it took the five aforementioned Winds, plus Talking God and Calling God. After the healing they accompanied him home.

Later, it was found out, however, that he had lost his former mind. Talking God, Calling God, Dark Wind and Blue Wind all tried to restore it, but they could not. Then divination was tried to see who had stolen his mind. Successively the divining cord was tried before Dark, Blue, Yellow, White and Striped Winds. Next it was tried before Mummifying Woman, Talking God and Calling God. Again there was no success. Next it was tried before all Small Bird People, Snake People, Spider People and Water Monster People, still without success. The Mirage People next directed Messenger Fly to take the cord to the Thunder People, but it would not move there. They in turn sent him to Reckless Coyote People. It was discovered that they indeed had the former mind and speech of the hero. Dark Wind was sent to get it back with prayer sticks and the customary jewel offerings. He was successful.

Next the hero met Old Man Horned Toad who instructed him how to protect himself from lightning by the use of flint arrows.

After this episode comes the teaching of basket making and the journey of the hero to collect songs and paintings for the Plumeway. After this he journeyed to Snake People to find out the proper making of prayer sticks. After the proper offerings were made he was instructed to go to Spider Woman Rock where the secrets were entrusted to him. After this he pays visits to various other supernaturals such as Bear People, Wind People, Pinon People, Spruce People, Rainbow People,

Thunder People, more Wind People and Reckless Coyote People. After making gifts to each, he was instructed in medicine, prayers, prayer sticks, songs, sandpaintings and the making of buckskin head and face masks for dancers who would impersonate the gods.

After he had learned everything, including how to make medicine hoops, knot unraveling and Cactus and Yucca sandpaintings he returned to his own people. Now at Navajo Mountain he taught them everything to use for the ceremony. Then he went up to be with the Holy People and live there.

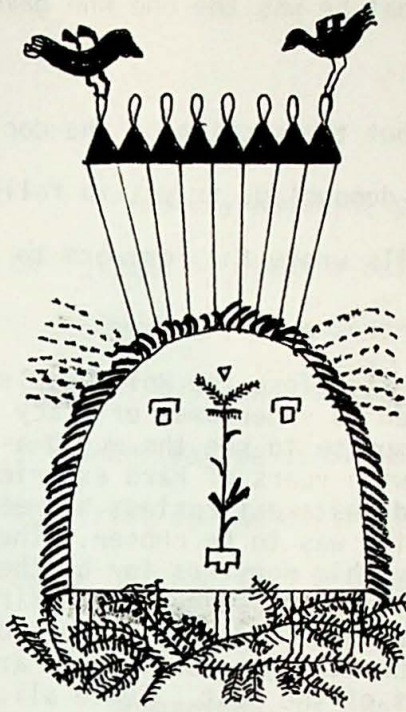
Mere curiosity on the part of the reader might cause him to feel that the writer should have supplied more detail. He feels that sufficient has been supplied for the purpose of this study. This was not to be a study of the ceremonials themselves, but of the theology. A sample number of deities has been presented in such a way that it should be easy to recognize the ambivalence of both men and gods in their interrelations.

Among the factors which may cause an illness that necessitates the use of Windways are being thrown to the ground by a whirlwind, using firewood for cooking from a tree that has been uprooted by wind, spending the night in a place hollowed by wind, eating something crawled over by a snake, and using dried cactus for cooking, though this certainly does not exhaust the possibilities of the Chantway.

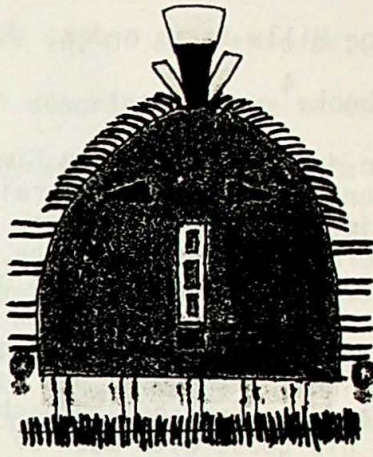
The following page contains six representative drawings of head and face masks for the dancers who represent gods, especially of those commonly called the *Yei'bi'chéi*. These are copies made of masks of buckskin that Father Haile uses.³ On the top row, left to right are

³Fr. Berard Haile, Head and Face Masks in Navajo Cermonialism, (St. Michaels, Arizona: St. Michaels Press, 1947).

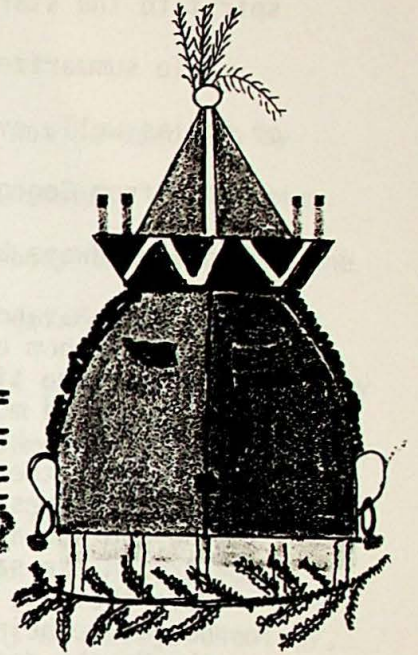
GOD MASKS OF THE DANCERS



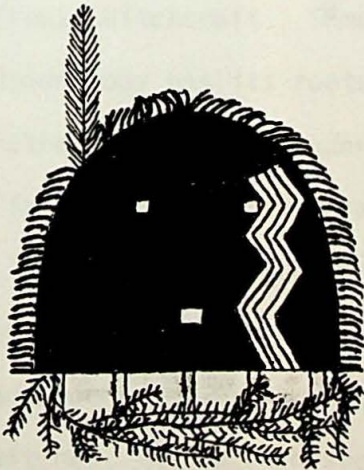
Hastyé'alti



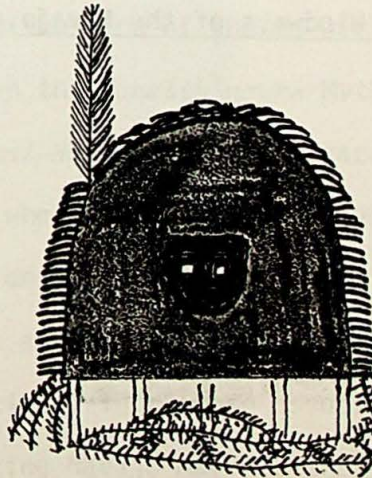
Yéi baád



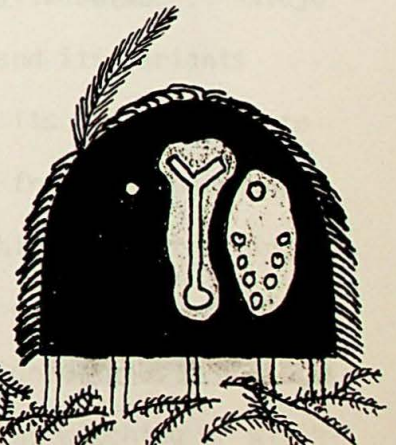
Tsaha' dólza



Nayenez' gání



Tobad' sistsíni



Hash' jesh' tsíni

Talking God, Female *Ye'i*, Fringe Mouth God. On the bottom row, left to right, are Monster Slayer, Born For Water, Fire God. On the latter face mask the Pleiades are marked to indicate that he was the one who gave his spirit to the stars.

To summarize not only this chapter, but the section on the doctrine of god as well, even though the chapter on demonology is yet to follow, a quote from George Mills is in order. Mills wrote the foreword to Wyman's *Windways* book.⁴

The Navaho does not disparage himself before the Holy People, many of whom enjoy human failings raised to superhuman efficacy. At the same time he has resisted the impulse to see the world as simpler and more comfortable than he, with years of hard experience behind him, knows it to be. In the Old Testament contest between two gods, the one that answered with fire was to be chosen. The Navaho understands the deaf god who gave him monsters for brothers, the god who answers with cold, old age, and the sadness of desire. Through the sandpaintings he approaches these gods and is healed. Nevertheless, his gods, with much of the stranger about them, are not above being flummoxed by the heroes of the past. Above all, the Navaho does not care to be closed in, as by a magic circle, with these Holy People; the opening of the sandpainting guardian is a symbolic exit toward which he may edge and through which, should the occasion arise, he may for a time elude for a time these ambivalent forces.

⁴Wyman, The Windways of the Navajo, p. 8

CHAPTER VII

DEMONOLOGY

Properly speaking perhaps this title should not be used, as by definition it means a belief in, or a worship of, demons. It is being used, however, as a general descriptive term to embody the belief in the power of evil and the employment of that power to gain one's own ends. If cancer may be spoken of as a body cell which has gone wild, ultimately resulting in the destruction of the body itself, demonology, as used here, could be described as a cell of theology which has gone wild. It would, if unchecked, destroy the body of the theology upon which it feeds.

Demonology, as applied in a systematics study of Navajo theology, will be studied under the four categories which the Navajo themselves use in the employment of the powers of evil for gain. The English equivalent of the Navajo terms would be, Witchery, Sorcery, Wizardry, and Frenzy Witchcraft. Some discussion of ghosts will also be made. Navajo demonology has its roots in the *Hanelth' nayhe* Myth and its variants rather than in the *Hadenigai-Hunai* Myth. It traces its origins back to First Man and First Woman who had the power of evil from the beginning.

The Navajo are very definitive in their own thinking in treating each of the above terms as a separate entity, but a certain syncretism does occur at times, especially in a close association of ghosts and witches. An English speaking Navajo may use the terms witching or witchcraft as a generic term for all four of the categories.

Probably all religions of the world have an evil side, a demonology; therefore, it is virtually certain that some of this was a part of the religious strain which the *Diné* brought down with them from the North. But how much of the current beliefs are a result of that importation, and how much they are the result of borrowing from the Pueblos, the Utes, and the Spanish, is impossible to ascertain. Some societies, some eras, and some areas appear more subject to being strongly influenced by demonology than others. The Southwest of the United States appears to have been, and still to be, strongly influenced by various forms of Demonology and witchcraft.¹

Therefore, it is quite likely that a large share of Navajo belief in, and fear of, this has been a result of borrowing from their Spanish and Pueblo neighbors. Fear of ghosts may well be a result more of their northern heritage.

The belief in, and fear of, the various forms of witchcraft is wide-spread among the Navajo. Many of the Christian Navajo even while professing disbelief in it will still make every effort to avoid those things which might provoke a "witching." It is relatively easy to scoff at these beliefs and fears if one comes from a rational, scientific society. It would be doing an injustice to the study though to simply pass it off as "superstition," especially for the Christian. The latter has ample warning from his God in the Bible to avoid the practice of witchcraft. The Navajo who believes in the power of the various forms of witchcraft would certainly be much more susceptible to the power of suggestion regarding an alleged "witching," but this should not be taken

¹Mary Simmons, Witchcraft In The Southwest, (Flagstaff, Arizona: Northland Press, 1974).

to mean the whole matter is merely the power of suggestion. Many anglos who have lived among the Navajo for a longer period of time are firmly convinced that it is a real power at work. Five of this writer's anglo informants even claim to have witnessed were-animals.²

Because of the strong and prevalent fear of Witches, Wizards and Sorcerers among the Navajo it is still not uncommon for them to mete out a violent death to one "convicted" of being such. Normally this is done by relatives of an individual who has been "witched." The commonest forms of death in such circumstances appear to be either shooting the accused, or in clubbing the individual to death. In a few instances the accused has been banished upon the promise never to practice the evil art again. The euphemism was used in one instance, reported on by an anglo trader and two Navajo informants, "They disappeared him."³

The writer has employed the same general technique, the use of the oblique question or statement when speaking with Navajo informants that Kluckhohn used.⁴ Most Navajo were reluctant to discuss the matter. The writer found, as did Kluckhohn,⁵ that the individual casually picked up hitchhiking, or the individual who was somewhat intoxicated were more prone to discuss it than others who were formally interviewed. He surmised that this was probably true because the former might feel safe because he would never see you again, and the latter simply had his

²AT1, AT2, AT3, AI6, AI7.

³AT1, N18, N19.

⁴Clyde Kluckhohn, Navajo Witchcraft, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962). pp. 14-19.

⁵Ibid., p. 14

inhibitions lowered by his intoxication.⁶ One Navajo man admitted to being a witch, but was reluctant to discuss much in detail.⁷

Kluckhohn also arrived at the conclusion that the practice of the various forms of witchcraft appeared to be more prevalent in the eastern portion of the Navajo Reservation than in the western portion.⁸ This writer has reached the same conclusion, but would go a step further and localize more centers of greater activity, especially so far as Witchery is concerned. Informants were from widely spread areas, yet there was a general agreement that certain places had the reputation as having either a higher concentration of Witches, or, at least, more Witchery was performed there.

Places which were most frequently mentioned, regardless of where the informant might be from, were Alamo, Canoncito, Ramah, Tohatchi and Shiprock in New Mexico, and Lukachukai, Canyon de Chelly and Naslini, Arizona.⁹

⁷Witch

⁸Kluckhohn, Navajo Witchcraft, pp. 73-75.

⁹Alamo and Ramah seem to be targeted because of the influx of non-Navajos there. Canyon de Chelly is likewise designated because of the Hopi influx there at one time, and the Canoncito area because these were "Enemy Navajo", those who assisted the anglos in subduing the other Navajo.

Naslini was mentioned by informants a number of times as the place where the "witches" caves were. It seems commonly accepted that groups of Witches frequently gather in caves for meetings, and it was said that the most popular place was the caves at Naslini.

The story was told by two anglo informants and three Navajo informants that in either 1969 or 1970 an anglo school teacher had become fascinated with witchcraft, and having heard of the witches' caves at Naslini, decided to search for these caves. He is alleged to have been killed by Witches in the area and to have been eaten by them. The writer was able to ascertain that a male teacher did vanish without explanation in 1970. The community where he was teaching is, for obvious reasons, not going to be revealed. This writer's curiosity was

Witchery is said to have originated with First Man in the Red World, in its last chamber, when he gathered together all evil into himself and then to have distributed it among the nine Holy Persons who were there with him. He then perfected it in the Yellow World when he brewed a concoction, many times referred to as poison. The tips of Yucca, the needles of Cactus, the stingers of Bumblebee and Wasp were all dipped in it. Ants and Snakes (Rattlesnakes), because they had no place else to store it, all swallowed it. Snakes got a sufficient amount that their bite kills. Ants got only enough to make people sick. But that is why these things are all to be avoided and not offended; otherwise a ceremony will have to be held for a person who has offended them. Certain stories are not told, certain chants are not sung, and certain other things must be abstained from, after the last frost. After this time there is a danger of being struck by lightning or bitten or stung by snakes, ants, bees and wasps. This is true even without witchcraft. This illustrates the power of First Man's evil.

Initiation into Witchery always requires the apprentice to kill someone, particularly a brother or sister. He, or she, must then eat a part of the flesh of the victim and the balance is stored in one of the witch caves to be eaten by the others. Most commonly it is men who are supposed to be witches rather than women, though they too may be. Witchery is said to be most frequently learned from a family member, and it is usually first entered into in order to wreck vengeance upon someone.

not sufficiently great for him to search for these caves. He has been informed by two informants where some of them are alleged to be. He has had the experience on four different occasions while driving in the Naslini area to suddenly have a clammy and extremely uncomfortable feeling, and the sense of an evil presence with him in the automobile. All of these experiences happened after he had begun this research.

Later practicing of the evil art seems most frequently to be for the gain of wealth. This may either be accomplished by taking the wealth of the dead, or by taking the wealth of a victim, or by charging high fees for "witching" an individual at the request of another.

Witchery, because it is evil, and because it is so powerful, is very dangerous for the Witch himself. If he practices Witchery upon someone and is found out, he will usually get sick and perhaps die himself, especially if the one he witched recovers from it by means of a ceremony.

Witchery is not only closely associated with death and the dead, it is also closely associated with the practice of incest. A person accused of the latter is almost automatically assumed also to be a Witch. The role of unnatural sex acts are closely allied with Witchery, especially the male Witches having intercourse with dead females.

In order to work their malevolent art the Witches grind up or pulverize some flesh from a dead person, especially prized is a portion of the skull, and administer it to the intended victim. This may be done by dropping it down the smoke hole of a hogan, putting it into the mouth or nose of the victim when he is asleep, blowing it upon him in a crowd, or even by mixing it into his food or placing it in a cigarette.

Witches are abroad chiefly at night. Normally they do not use their own form, but step out of their own skin and into the skin of an animal or bird. These were-animals may usually be recognized by oversized tracks and/or by greater speed than the natural animal has. Among the more commonly accepted forms are those of coyote, owl and wolf. These were-forms are also used when a group of Witches gathers in the cave for one of their evil ceremonies.

Another form of "poison" used to accomplish Witchery is obtained from the semen of the Witch after he has had intercourse with a female corpse. This is then dried and administered in one of the usual ways. One informant believed that this was an even stronger form of "poison."¹⁰

Because Witches are also supposed to steal corpses from the graves they have become closely identified with ghosts, but the two are distinct from each other. Ghosts, too, may work evil upon someone, especially a former family member, but this is usually because of some wrong done to the person before he died, or because of an improper burial.

Sorcery is the casting of a spell by enchantment. It may have the intended death of a person as its aim, or it may be limited to a less final aim, such as loss of health or money. Not only people may be the victims of Sorcery, but also animals, crops and other property. Even an automobile may be the victim.¹¹ It may even be practiced against a community.

A Sorcerer, too, is initiated by his killing someone of near relationship, and according to generally accepted belief, Sorcerers, too, participate with Witches in the eating of dead humans.

A Sorcerer does not even need to see his intended victim, all he needs is a portion of that person, such as fingernail clippings, hair clippings, dry skin bits, feces or urine.¹² This body material may be

¹⁰N18

¹¹A Navajo friend and informant was quite concerned that the writer had wrecked his car. It was the third time, within a year that it had been in a serious accident. He said, "My friend, I think that your car has become *chin'dii* (been witched). Someone is trying to kill you. Do not fix it again, or it will, for that will be the fourth time."

¹²In 1971 and 1972 the writer was teaching Navajo adult education classes in Gallup. Many of the students would carefully place any of

buried in a grave, or mixed with corpse material, or buried under a lightning struck tree, and an incantation spoken over it. A number of days is also set by the sorcerer when it will begin to take effect, usually four days. The incantation may be one of the prayers or chants said or sung backward.

Another technique is for the Sorcerer to make an evil sandpainting near the home of the victim, normally to the north of it. Some Sorcerers are also said to make carvings of the intended victim and to slowly "kill the doll" and, thereby, the victim. It is also mentioned that some Sorcerers make a picture of the victim on a flat, small stone and slip it in the victim's pocket or in his car. Another form of Sorcery supposedly is for the Sorcerer to take the skin of a horned toad, stuff it with the victim's body material, speaking the spell over it, and burying it near the victim's home.¹³ It is frequently mentioned that if a Sorcerer can find out the intended victim's secret name, the one given him at birth by his mother, the spell works faster and better.

Wizardry is supposedly of fairly recent usage among the Navajo, dating only from the post-Ft. Sumner period. Some believe it to be of

their nail clippings or loose hair into a pocket or purse. One class in 1972 had nine members ranging from nineteen to forty-three years of age. Every one of them would very carefully pull hair from their comb and place it very carefully into a pocket or purse. One of the class was jokingly asked, "And who is wanting to "witch" you?" The response was that a girl in another class came from a bad family at Shiprock and maybe she was a "witch" too.

¹³In 1974, the writer twice found dead, stuffed horned toads hidden under bushes outside his office. On another occasion he found a gray lizard stuffed with a few strands of hair and some other substance hanging by a string from a bush under his office window. It was decorated with a collar of small feathers from the wing of a gray owl.

He believes that these were placed there by a Navajo whom he had imprisoned. The man threatened revenge, and was said by several other Navajo to do "witching."

Mexican origin, others of Pueblo origin. It is the evil art of being able to inject a foreign object into the victim. It is usually not considered to be fatal, except possibly over a long period of time.

Wizards, too, supposedly can receive the power only by killing a sibling or other near relative, and eating some of the victim's flesh, but normally Wizards are not believed to have the power to become were-animals, nor do they participate in the gatherings of the Witches and Sorcerers. The Wizards are almost always old men.

The methods of injecting the foreign objects into the victims are generally assumed to be that the object is placed upon a buckskin, or in a basket, and made to rise into the air and fly at the victim by the power of the Wizard's incantations. Some of the more common objects used are deer hair, porcupine quills, puma whiskers, sand from a red ant hill, cactus spines, small stones, and beads.

Frenzy Witchcraft might not be thought of as very bad by a non-Navajo, at least not at first. The main purposes of the practice is to provide "love potions" or "love magic." Sometimes it is referred to as the Prostitution Way. It has the broader usage also of providing success in gambling and business.

However, the practitioner of Frenzy Witchcraft is required to kill a sister to learn it, and after he has learned it is bound to inter-course with a sister. The use of numerous plants in the making of the "love potion" is associated with it, and coupled with the administration of the potion are numerous chants. Other associations with the dead or with the practitioners of Witchery, Wizardry and Sorcery are not associated with it. Most Navajo are more reluctant to speak of this form than of any of the others.

One thing which all four have in common with one another and with Satanism, the "evilway" of Christianity, is a bizarre preoccupation with sexual activity, especially of unnatural types.

If a deity, or spirit, of "witchcraft" were to be named, it would have to be First Man, or First Man and First Woman. There is, however, no worship of First Man involved, simply using the evil that was his and that he taught to the people.

Though it is not part of "witchcraft," the belief in and fear of ghosts should be briefly mentioned. In a sense, ghosts might be considered the witches of the afterlife. The fear of ghosts will cause a family to abandon a hoghan if a family member has died in it. When this happens, the door opening is blocked, the north wall torn out for removal of the body, and the roof caved in. All family possessions are left in it. It may even be burned.¹⁴ According to the old ways, when a corpse was buried the bearers returned to the family by a different route and with an odd skipping step so the ghost would not be able to track them. Much of this is now dying out with burial in cemeteries. At one time it was also customary to kill a dead man's horse at the grave and break the saddle, as well as leaving some broken pots and broken tools for him to use in the afterworld. Weapons were not left by the Navajo.

Because both witches and ghosts are abroad at night one must never whistle after dark; it attracts one or the other. Instead, "Wanderer in the Dark" song may be sung to ward them off. Also, it is

¹⁴Some anthropologists insist that the hoghan is always burned, but the writer knows of a number that were not. Also, today the modern house is not abandoned, nor are the family possessions burned. Instead, the proper ceremony will be determined and then held to purify the house and possessions.

well not to be alone outside after dark, but always in a group. The Navajo at one time seldom traveled after dark, and even today the Navajo try to avoid darkness whenever possible.¹⁵

¹⁵The Navajo fear of the dark and its association with witchcraft and the ghosts of the dead has been very profitable to the electrical companies. Nearly every group of hoghans has an outside pole light to ward off darkness.

CHAPTER VIII

MAN, HIS ORIGIN AND DESTINY

The question, "Who am I?"; "Where did I come from?"; "What will happen to me now and after death?"; are questions which appear to have a universal intrigue for mankind. Man wants more than mere biological information or answers as to whom his parents and grandparents were. Man wants to know what the very root and essence of mankind is. He wants to know how and when mankind had its beginnings on earth. Furthermore, he also wants to know the origin of everything else associated with him here on earth, and he wants to know what happens to him after death. These questions may vary in form, and, depending on intellect and other factors, may vary greatly in the depth of the probing he does, but they are common to all of mankind. Man has sought the answers from his religion, and if they were not there, he supplied the answers to his religion.

A very cursory glance was given to Navajo history in Chapter II. This helps give an understanding of who the Navajo is; where he came from. This chapter, however, will give a view of the origin of mankind, the Navajo especially, and its destiny as the Navajo looks at himself. For this study of the doctrine of man as Navajo theology understands it a detailed look will be taken at the Origin Myth, referred to earlier in the doctrine of god.

The Origin Myth has been divided in different ways by various people. For the purpose of this study it will be divided into five

major parts: Pre-emergence, events in the underworlds; Emergence, the coming out into this, the Fourth World; Post-emergence, events of creation and setting in order of objects and people in the present world; Monsterway, the monsters who besieged man, their slaying by the twin hero sons of Changing Woman and Sun with the subsequent destruction and recreation of the world and man; and Clan Origin Myths, the beginning of the clans and the subsequent development of the Navajo tribe. Monsterway will be dealt with also in the next chapter, "Sin and Soteriology."

The Chantways in general begin with the origin myth. It depends on the chantway, the chanter, the purpose of the ceremony, and even the ability to pay for the ceremony, on how detailed or sketchy the account may be. Some of the Chantways are subdivisions of major Chantways, so the account begins at a later point in time, assuming that everyone is aware of preceding events. So, for example, the Windways referred to in Chapter VII, The Latter Gods, usually has the telling of the emergence and settlement of this world, but, when it begins the Chantway itself, harks back to First Man and First Woman who are characters associated already with the First World.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." In such a simple way the Christian's Bible begins the history of the world and of mankind. It continues with a more detailed account of the various components of nature, including man, and follows up with a history of mankind in its relationship to God and to itself. Navajo theology has nothing this simple. Man is, he evolves, he is created. And the cycle is repeated several times. Some portions are directly contradictory of other portions. Some of this has appeared as the doctrine of god and was discussed in its various facets. And in it all, the Navajo has

succeeded in hiding his early history even from himself, and has woven a web of confusion. One thing which is very clear, however, is that while the individual Navajo is taught to be very self-effacing, there is an arrogant pride in clan origin and in being *Diné*, the People. It is quite a simple thing to him; the Navajo always were.

There are at least twelve different origins of humanity according to Navajo myth, twenty-two if the section on the westward creation is broken down into the individual tribes created on the westward movement. Somewhat will be said about each of these origins in the following pages. As all the Navajo names have previously been mentioned, except the various tribe and clan names, only the English name will be given in most instances.

When the period of the Clan Origin Myth is entered, the events are considered by most anthropologists to be quasi-historical rather than pure myth. Not all the clans will be mentioned. There is not even agreement on how many clans there are, or were, but comments will be made regarding several of them. There is not even agreement on the four clans made by Changing Woman on Santa Cruz Island. Nearly every clan of today wants to be one of the original four. It is almost universally accepted among them that the Tall House Clan was the first, but whether this clan was made by *Bego'chiddy* at Huerfano or by Changing Woman in California is not agreed upon.

The first people are to be found in either First Man and First Woman, or in the ants of the First World, or both. In either event, man from the beginning is conceived of as a mixture of good and evil. If some of the people are considered as descendants of First Man and First Woman they are of divine origin. If they are considered the

descendants of the ants of the First World they are creatures of evolution. Nine informants insisted that some of the people of today are descendants of these ants, and that among these descendants are the Navajo. This is why the Navajo have always been, because the ants were there in the beginning, no matter which Myth is followed.¹ Three of these informants said that the black ants, because they were the first ones up into each of the new worlds, were the ancestors of the Navajo, or at least of part of the Navajo.²

When such statements are compared with other statements which point to the origin of the clans as the origin of the Navajo one of the previously mentioned contradictions takes place.

Some of the Chantways, such as the Windway mentioned in Chapter VI, The Present Gods, trace the descent of the hero of the Chantway from First Man and First Woman.

The next people were created beings, made in the Second World, but they did not remain people.. These were the *Ethkay'nah'ashi*, the twin men and twin women made by *Bego'chiddy*, but killed by Fire God. They were restored to life by their maker, but for a higher purpose. They became the Spirit of Life by which life was caused to come into being for later creations. They might be compared to what the Bible in Genesis refers to as "the Breath of life."³

Because of the killing of the twins it was necessary to leave the Second World and move up to the Third World. Again, it is possible to

¹MM1, MM2, MM3, MM5, N13, N14, N16, N17, N19

²MM1, MM3, N19

³Gen. 3:16-19

make a comparison with the Bible which relates how the world was changed for man after man sinned.⁴ In the restoration of the twins to life might be seen a comparison with the first Gospel promise made to Adam and Eve,⁵ for in the fulfillment of that promise was their own restoration to life.

With the advent into the Third World several more makings and creations of people took place. The apparent distinction which the Navajo make in the use of these two terms is the same distinction which a Christian might make, either that they were made, or formed out of something, or that they were simply called into existence. The Navajo will not make this distinction in his own mind though unless pressed into analyzing it.

The first new people of the Third World were made. They were the men: Made Now, Center Man, Behind Man, and Fourth Made Man. Each of them had a female counterpart of the same name. The myth continues with the broad statement that other people were then created, and especially mentions the Zuni and the Hopi as a second creation after the others. This is usually followed by "but the Navajo were there from the beginning." Afterward the Hopi were given a female Spirit of Life and the Navajo were given a male Spirit of Life to watch over them because the Great God wanted the Hopi and the Navajo to be friends.⁶

The next event is the first marriage. Apparently other possible earlier unions took place, but this is the first incident referred to as

⁴Gen. 3:16-19

⁵Gen. 3:15

⁶This is quite possibly an addition to the myth made at a time when the Hopi and Navajo were striving for a peace settlement. The giving of the female and male spirits may well refer to the Navajo stealing of Hopi women.

marriage. Made Now married the daughter of Head Woman. Head Woman's origin is not recorded in the telling of the myth. This was also the real beginning of trouble for mankind. Made Now was appointed one of the chiefs of the people. He was put in charge of the hunting. One day as he returned from hunting his wife was not home, meals had not been prepared, and the children had not been cared for. This happened four days in a row. The fourth evening when the wife returned home her husband would not speak to her. Eventually it was determined that she had a young lover, one of the spirits. This caused her husband to call a council of all the chiefs the next morning. All of them resigned because of the action of the woman. The quarrel intensified and eventually involved all the men and all the women. Each began saying they could get along without the other sex.

The Holy People (the gods) determined that the sexes be separated, the men and all boys beyond nursing age to cross the river and live there. The women were to remain where they had been living. The men built boats and crossed over. Wrapped in a Rainbow, the hermaphrodite god, went with the men. On successive days the women called the men to come get the children, including ones born after the men's departure. The men set to work, building hoghans, hunting, caring for the children, and clearing ground for planting. All in all, the men became quite successful and wealthy. Wrapped in a Rainbow showed them how to plant in the proper ceremonial pattern and the crops were good. The men worked hard and were tired.

The women, however, planted in a haphazard manner, they ate up the food which the men had left them, they did not hunt, and no new clothing was made. They partied every night, and intercourse was had

indiscriminately with male animals who had remained with them and with one another. It is, they say, at this time that the Monsters were born who were later to trouble men in the Fourth World. Some of the men also had unnatural sex with animals. In fact, at this time occurs the first of the "hero killed and restored to life by proper offerings" myths.

In the fourth growing season the women began to plead for the men to take them back. They were starving. The wife of the chief, the one who had begun all the trouble, threatened to throw herself into the river to drown. A number of the women had died of starvation. The gods asked the men if they would take the women back if they would behave. The men finally agreed, for they themselves were lonely and it was hard to raise the children. The women were brought over in the boats, but they smelled so bad and looked so terrible that the men on the boats got sick. The women were made to stay outside the camp for four days. Each day they took sweatbaths and put on new clothing until they were clean again. Even so, on the fourth day a few of them, the ones who had been the worst, still smelled a little like the animals they had been mating with. After this the law was passed by the gods, "Men were to be the head over the women and everybody was to obey the proper chiefs."

It was in this world that the people began growing the four colors of corn and also grew the other three of the four holy plants, beans, squash, and tobacco. The women were taught by Head Woman to grind corn properly. Each group, or tribe, of people had a different colored dress and different moccasins. Also the Red Flower for the Eagle Ceremony was planted.

One day First Woman and Salt Woman were walking by a pool at the river. This was a whirlpool, and in the middle of it a baby was

floating. Coyote Man then came along and took the baby from the water, hiding it under his coat. He kept it hidden for four days, at the end of which time a wailing started from all directions, and hot flood waters started rushing across the earth to the place where the people lived. The account of this flood and the climb up into the Fourth World has been related in Chapter IV, The Former Gods. Prior to the ascent into the Fourth World Head Woman told Made Now to sing the proper song to save them. This song, "Wanderer in the Dark," may also be sung by someone who has done wrong today and he will be forgiven.

Upon arrival in the Fourth World, the present world, also figured by some as the Fifth World or the Twelfth World, and after the waters had subsided upon the return of Water Monster's child, a council of the people was called. Because they did not know what to do, Wolf and Mountain Lion were relieved of their positions as chiefs and from this time on man was to rule over the animals. The account of the building of the sudatory, or sweat house, the planning of creation, the building of the Creation Hohan, and the creation of the present world was made in Chapter IV, The Former Gods. Here though an account of continuing creations of man and his life is made.

More people were made in the Creation Hohan. Because of the mother-in-law prohibition and the fact that Made Now had spoken to his mother-in-law, Head Woman, the Sun, Moon and Stars would not move. Coyote said that someone had to die. It happened, and *Etsay' dassalíni* died. He was found later down in the Third World, brushing his hair. This is where most people go when they die. A few go down to the First World, the Burning Pitch Place, and a few go up to heaven. This is

what happened to the next to die, *Has' estrageh hasléen*. He was found in heaven.⁷ More will be said of these things in the next chapter.

Now was the time when the Monsters began to appear and to destroy men. There are thirteen individuals and/or sets of them. They, too, will be dealt with in the next chapter. They were all destroyed by the hero twins, the sons of Changing Woman. In these two generations there is actually the account of two more makings of mankind, both of the generations being of semi-divine origin, but both being progenitors of more life. The birth of Changing Woman, and of Monster Slayer and Born For Water, have been singled out for treatment in Chapter IV, and more will be said of the latter two in the next chapter.

It should be pointed out at this point though that there were some more evil beings left after the slaying of the monsters proper. Monster Slayer set out to find and destroy them also. He found them to be *Sobu*, Old Age; *Bi'eth*, Laziness or Sleepiness; *Yah*, Body Lice; *De' Chan*, Hunger, *Tayén*, Thinness; and *Ah'tsaylin*, Lies. They all escaped death by proving that they were of some benefit to mankind. They were all permitted to live, but were all banished. Old Age and Lies were banished to fifteen miles east of Pueblo Bonito, and the other four to nine miles north of Farmington, New Mexico.⁸

After the last of the Monsters were slain it was decided, some say by *Bego'chiddy*, to cleanse the earth, others say by Sun as his price for

⁷It is suspected that major elements of this portion of the myth have been recent additions, influenced by the teachings of Mormonism, both so far as the division into levels and in the idea that it was necessary for sin and death to come so that the creation could be completed.

⁸Both the pragmatism of the Navajo in his religion and his prejudice are shown in this anecdote about the evils that escaped death.

The latter is evidenced in the fact that Laziness is called a black man. The prejudice of the Navajo against the negro is very strong,

giving the hero twins the armor and weapons to destroy the Monsters, his son and his pets, to destroy the earth with a flood and to rebuild it. Twelve days afterward the flood was to begin. It began to rain and rained for either twelve days, or for forty-two days, depending upon the myth version employed.⁹ The water stood upon the earth for another forty-two days, and then began to run off, and the world dried out. All of the world had been covered except the mountain tops. After the waters receded everything was assembled at Huerfano Mountain, and after rain all vegetation began to grow.

The gods and all the spirits met in another new creation hogan and began to plan the making of more people and more animals. Within the hogan itself three more men and three more women were made. The men were made of turquoise and white corn and given the corn pollen. The women were made of white shell and yellow corn, and given the corn bug. Some see in this the division of labor on a theological basis for the raising of corn. The men hoe and plant. The women cultivate and reap.

The next account of the making of man is the most elaborate. The gods now laid out the parts on robes in the hogan in pairs. Feet, toe

and the stereotype of the negro as a lazy person is even stronger among the Navajo than among the anglo.

Old Age is necessary, for it would not be good to live forever. Laziness, or Sleepiness, is necessary because man must rest at times. Hunger, and it's companion, Thinness, are also good for man. He appreciates food more if he goes hungry at times, and hunger occurred often enough in the old days. It is better for a man to be a little thin because he can move better. Body Lice argued that they took up little room and did man no serious harm, while Lies was quite persuasive that it was not always good to tell the truth. The truth caused hurt feelings and even fights.

⁹The writer believes it may safely be assumed that the twelve day version is the older, as it is a multiple of either four or of six, holy numbers of the Navajo myth. The forty-two is evidently an elaboration of the forty days of the Bible.

nails and ankles were made of soil; legs of lightning; knees of white shell, bodies of white or yellow corn; veins of striped corn and blue corn; hair on arms and legs of calico corn; eyebrows black corn; the blood was of red corn; the heart obsidian; breath of white wind; the ears of white shell and the eardrums of mica; the flesh of the body was of the flesh of all animals and of flower pollen and of all kinds of water; arms were of rainbow; hair of darkness; skull of sun; whiskers of darkness; face of daybreak; nose of red beads; eyes were of the little suns; teeth were of white corn; the voice was of thunder; tongue of straight lightning; nerves were kept moving by the little whirlwinds; finger movement was the air; saliva the little rain; and tears and body moisture the medium rain. These people were called Made of Everything, and the ones who had been saved from the Monsters and the flood in the cave were called People Who Came Up.

In the making everything was laid out in pairs on robes of Daybreak along the south, west and north walls of the hogan and covered with buckskin. The pair on the north were also covered with the Rainbow. A *yei* sat at the east. The Spirit of *Siss'nah'jini* Mountain waved over them with a rain bow and the Spirit of *Tsoll' tsith'* Mountain waved over them with sunlight. The *yei* then motioned over them with the Spirit of Life, and after four calls they came alive. After this all the people spoke a different language, and everyone scattered out to live. The Navajo had the best corn and the best turkeys.

After this the first clan was made there at Huerfano, the ones first called Wandering Around the Mountain, but who were afterward called the Salt Clan.

After this came the call from Sun for Changing Woman to come live in the West with him. She did not want to go when he called at first, but because he was insistent and her twin sons said she should go, she decided to do so. Salt Woman did not want her to and warned that wars would start between the people if she did. She left with body guards. Along the way she created the Pima near San Francisco Peaks. Further on, near Oak Creek Canyon she created the Yuma. Further on another unidentified tribe was created, with the next creation being the Apache. After this two more tribes were created. Their names translate simply as Wooden Soles and Baby Talk. Along the Colorado River she created the Papago, and nearing the coast the Arrow People were created and those who later became the Foggy Clan of the Navajo.

After she and Sun were established in their home on Santa Clara, or Santa Barbara, Island, they made more people. She laid out White Shell Woman images and he laid out Turquoise Man images. She then took skin from her right side and wrapped one pair of images to become the Mud Clan. Then she took skin from her left side and covered a pair of images to become the Yellow Water Clan. Next the skin from her head to her breast was used to cover a pair to become the Light Water Clan. Finally, skin from her breast to her hips was used to cover the last pair of images for the making of the Bitani Clan. Of these part were sent back to Huerfano or to Chaco Canyon to become the Tall House Clan. When all the pairs of images had been covered she covered them with the Rainbow Spirit and waved over them with the Spirit of Life and they all became alive.

Later yet she made more people to live with her on the island, but because she made too many she sent some to Santa Rosa Island. After

this she made still more people and blew them across the ocean to become all sorts of people, however they wanted to. One of them became the god of the Americans, and some became gods of other people.

As was previously mentioned, this now gets into quasi-history. The next account is of the mythical wanderings of the four clans back to Navajoland. The serious student of history and geography can fairly easily trace the journeys if he strips them of the magical element.

The Navajo doctrine of man has him being made, created, evolving and simply appearing. Man is as his gods are, good and evil. In his past history and in his present life he must live on a par basis with the gods, properly observing all ritual, but begging no favors. He does what has been shown him in the proper use of holy things, and the gods respond by the restoration of harmony.

The Navajo fears the dead, or the ghosts of the dead, but he has no special fear of death itself. It is a natural part of life as much as is birth. But, there is a wide range of theological thought concerning the lot of man after death.

There is one school of theological thought among them that conceives of man existing as a ghost for some time after his death. During this time he remains in the vicinity of the burial place, unless he can find his way back to his former dwelling. After a period of time, and no one appears sure when this is, the ghost of the person is simply absorbed in the atmosphere to become a part of the general surroundings without a personal identity any longer.¹⁰

There is another school of thought which believes that if prescribed burial customs have been followed, and if the person's ghost

¹⁰MM3, MM4, N11, N12, N15

cannot find its way back to its former dwelling it will go down to the Third World to live with all the other ghosts there. This is not conceived of as either a very happy place, or as a very sad place.¹¹ The Navajo, however, is not buried with weapons. This would make the other ghosts think he had hostile intentions.¹²

There is a third school of thinking, probably influenced by Christianity, that has the wicked ones who have not made their life straight again going down to the First World, the Burning Pitch Place. Some other people who have been very good will go up to heaven, and the vast majority of people will simply go to live with all the other spirits.¹³

With this type of thinking, it is only logical that the primary concern of the Navajo should be for this life.

¹¹N16, N19, N114

¹²The writer has heard of one Navajo who was buried in recent years with a rifle. The comment was made of him that he was going to need it because he'd have so many enemies. AT2.

¹³AT1, N13, N111.

CHAPTER IX

SIN AND SOTERIOLOGY

Both sin and soteriology have been referred to a number of times in this work, but only in connection with other incidents or with other parts of doctrine. In this chapter the concept of sin itself will be dealt with, as will the results or consequences of sin, and soteriology, or the salvation from sin. It will be seen that the Navajo concept of these is far different from the Lutheran concept.

Lutheran theology might speak of sin in the words, "Sin is the transgression of the law."¹ This would be a definition of sin. Or, it might speak of the results of sin, as for instance, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin."² Or, it might speak of the kinds of sin, original and actual. Or, it might speak of the results of sin, that man is now by nature blind, dead, and an enemy of God.

Following that same general outline the Navajo concept of sin may also be spoken of, or defined, both as to what it is and what its results are. In Navajo theology sin could probably be best defined as that which causes disharmony between man, the gods, and the balance of nature. The results of sin might be spoken of as illness, injury, fighting, ill will, death, or a number of other easily seen and definable circumstances

¹ John 3:4

² Rom. 5:12

of life. Death, of course, only the natural act of dying. There is no concept of an eternal death or eternal punishment, except for a couple of rare instances which will shortly be reported on.

An example of this way of thinking might be the sin of urinating on an anthill. The ants were ancestors of the *Diné* in the lower worlds, therefore, it is an offense against one's ancestors. The result of such a sin might be kidney stones which are placed there by the ant people. Or, in the Navajo concept of harmony, it might cause one to be hurt by thunder, or lightning, or to suffer drowning. The latter three might occur because the Horned Toad which feeds on ants is closely related to rain, thunder and lightning, and would send these as punishment. This would not be a logical deduction according to western thought, but it is entirely logical to Navajo thinking and theology.

It is well at this point to briefly introduce the element of soteriology also in connection with the example. Briefly, man is his own savior. If something goes wrong he must perform the proper ritual to restore harmony. If, for instance, he suffers from kidney stones and it is determined that he committed the offense of urinating on an ant hill, The Red Antway ceremony would be held for him. This may be either a major nine day ceremony if the illness is serious or it may be given in another form for a lesser ailment.

The Red Antway follows the same basic structure as does the Windway.³ The Red Antway is not performed too often today, but when it is it goes into much detail of the pre-emergence events, for it traces the progress of the ant people up the path through the underworlds, and

³Leland C. Wyman, The Red Antway of the Navajo, (Santa Fe: Museum of Navajo Ceremonial Art, 1965).

it always follows the *Hanelth nayhe* Myth. Great stress is laid on the telling of the separation of the sexes in the previous world and the restoration. It reopens with new family quarrels in the present world. The first great problem is the ant people killing one another. They must be brought back to life. The customary form of the rejected offerings and the proper offerings is repeated for this and all subsequent misadventures.

The sin of people, whether human or ant, is very evident in all the chantways, also the results of that sin. The element of soteriology enters in the person of the myth hero who is usually also the perpetrator of the sin which has been the cause of the problems. He is taught, or his intercessors, the proper offerings and rituals of paintings, prayers and songs in order to make things right again. This knowledge is always transmitted to the other people so they will know how to perform in a similar situation. Thus they will be able to save themselves from disaster. Man thereby becomes his own savior.

The hero after this, when he has gained a certain measure of knowledge, makes a trip to the world of the Supernaturals to obtain more knowledge. He returns to his people to impart this knowledge to them also. Thus they are furthered in their ability to save themselves. The hero, in turn, is also a savior figure, and he receives a reward as such by being permitted to go live with the Supernaturals after he has imparted his wisdom and understanding to others.

There are two special savior figures in Navajo theology in the persons of the Twins, Monster Slayer and Born For Water. These two sons of Changing Woman and the Sun become grieved when the monsters begin slaying the people. They are determined to slay the monsters and save

the people. They, however, like the other heroes of the Chantways, are warned not to try. They are told that Sun is their father and that they must go to him for the proper weapons and armor for protection. Their search for their father and their request for weapons merely raises the ordeals of the other savior heroes to epic proportions. They finally return and set about the task they had appointed themselves. Monster Slayer actually goes forth after all the monsters by himself, with the exception of the first.

That one was *Yeh tso*, himself a son of the Sun, and the twins work together to slay him. For the slaying of the others Born For Water remains at home with a magic crystal that glows if his brother is in danger. He then sends help in various forms. It is not necessary for the purpose of this paper to name each Monster or group of Monsters of the same name. They, like the hero twins, are of epic proportions.

What is worth telling, however, is that this is like all other parts of the tapestry of Navajo religion, namely, the events all take place in the locale where the Navajo now reside. The dwelling of every monster is identified with a specific location, and, in the case of many, other geographic features can be pointed out which are the former parts of the monsters.⁴ One such example is the lava flows near Grants, New Mexico. These two streams of malpais are said to be the blood of *Yeh'tso* who had lived on nearby Mt. Taylor.

To sum up this chapter on sin and soteriology it would appear sufficient simply to say that sin is of no eternal consequence. It only

⁴The writer is well acquainted with many of the present day landmarks which are identified in the Myth with the destruction of a number of the monsters, such as the heart of the *Yeh'tso* which is identified as a lava plug near Bluewater Lake. Many of the other sites have also been visited and identified.

has a debilitating effect on man's life now. Sin disturbs the harmony of life, therefore, it is to be avoided. If it is not, then the proper ritual must be performed to restore that harmony. This man does himself.

Man does not need a savior from sin in the sense that the Christian understands the Savior. Man is his own savior from the bad things and situations in this life. The hero saviors were provided simply to show him what he himself must do.

CHAPTER X

IN SUMMARY

In concluding this study of Navajo theology, the writer believes that statements from three earlier writers of some renown are quite pertinent in describing the situation encountered in attempting to define and systematize Navajo theology.

Father Haile comments in his notes:

The elaborate system of religious worship among the Navajo lets them appear as a very religious people. Their anthropomorphous deities are numerous and stickingly democratic, each excelling in his peculiar sphere of independent activity and power. They are described as kind, hospitable and industrious. On the other hand, they are also regarded as fraudulent, treacherous, and unmerciful, subject to every human passion and weakness. Their lives are reflected to a great extent in Navajo social conditions. . . . This is especially true of the ceremonies or chants, most of which have been established by the Holy People for removing evil. The existence of evil is attributed to the wrath of the Holy People, such as Animals, Winds and Lightnings. Much is also due to secret agents of evil, such as sorcerers and witches. . . . The average Navajo is not inclined to study the involved fabric of his religion and knows little of it beyond ceremonial practices. The singer, or shaman, is entrusted with committing to memory what pertains to subjects of worship, and dispensing that knowledge in the ceremony, though no one singer knows all the branches. . . . The knowledge of the legend¹ is not a material requisite for conducting a proper ceremony.

Gladys Reichard made general comment on Navajo religion:

An outstanding feature of the whole is the fact that each element which goes to make it up involves an understanding of many other elements and their combination into properties, rites, beliefs and results. . . . No Navajo classification in our own terms can

¹Berard Haile, Unpublished notes on Navajo Culture and Religion.

be valid. We base classes on the unique, the distinctive; the Navajo bases his categories on the inclusive, which is determined by association of function. Such association depends upon theology which by now has developed such facility for inclusion that its limits can hardly be determined.²

Editha Watson could also write:

When the non-Navajo reads or hears of the Sacred Places, and they are many, he frequently tries to analyze why these are holy places. The Navajo simply accepts them as such. To him there is no necessity for a rational account of why something is. . . . To a Navajo there is no conflict, expressed or implied, when different legends make a certain place holy for different reasons. Either one may be true; he is not going to try to determine if one is true and another false. He may accept one account or the other,³ or, he may accept both. It simply does not concern him.

Based upon his own research, both for this study and for other studies he has made, the present writer can only concur in general with the statements of the three writers just mentioned. He attempted to overcome four very basic difficulties in this study. These were: the difficulty in pulling together the diverse elements of Navajo theology; the lack of a cohesive and definitive concept of god for the Navajo; the tremendous amount of contradictory statements in the Navajo religion, contradictions which do not bother the Navajo; and, the difficulty imposed by language and cultural barriers.

The writer feels that these difficulties, particularly the first three, have probably been amply illustrated in the study itself, but a brief comment is not out of order. The problem of pulling together the diverse elements of Navajo theology, and the lack of a cohesive and definitive concept of god are illustrative of the difficulty encountered

²Gladys A. Reichard, Prayer, The Compulsive Word, (New York: J. J. Augustin, 1944), p. 3-4.

³Editha L. Watson, Unpublished notes on Navajo Sacred Places.

by the tremendous number of contradictions in Navajo theology. These are contradictions which do not perturb the Navajo at all, but they present serious obstacles for the systematic theologian. These contradictions were mentioned numerous times in the study, such as, the instances when someone or something was made out of something else which had not yet been created.

The difficulty of language and cultural barriers deserves a bit more elaboration. There were most certainly language barriers at times. Some were barriers raised by the writer's capabilities in Navajo, or by the informant's or the interpreter's capabilities in English. Theological language barriers were, perhaps, even more formidable. There were no attempts made by the writer to use Lutheran theological terminology in questioning informants, but the difficulties in trying to express the concepts behind this terminology were immense. The Navajo simply does not think in this way.

There were also the instances when a certain point was reached in questioning that an informant would become vague in his answers, or simply not answer at all. There were other instances when the writer was convinced that he was deliberately being misled, or that, even though language was not an issue, the questioning was being deliberately misunderstood. The individual who knows the Navajo well is often aware of a shade, or screen, as it were, being pulled down by the Navajo which reflects only a blankness.

More sympathy can now be felt for earlier writers who tried to describe and define Navajo religious beliefs and customs, especially when they were not theologians. It is understandable why they failed to really understand Navajo theology, when not even the Navajo

understands it. They, therefore, dealt not with causes, but with symptoms, when they wrote about Navajo religious beliefs and practices. This study, within the limits set, should help to provide more of an understanding of the theological basis for the Navajo religious practices.

To treat the theology of the traditional Navajo religion in greater detail will require additional studies concerned with smaller segments. This should be done on the basis of comparative religion. The Origin Myth, or Emergence Myth, could quite easily become a major work rather than merely a part of several chapters dealing with the doctrine of god and the doctrine of man. Such things as the name of the first world, the Running Pitch Place, or Burning Pitch Place, can be compared with the Biblical account in Gen. 1:2 of how the world first was, or also with hell according to the various Biblical descriptions, or even with the northern darkness from whence the Athapascans first came. Does it have a relationship to all three?

More items of future study might be the Deluge account in the Bible, Genesis 6-9, with the two flood accounts in the Emergence Myth; another might be the division of speech in Genesis 11 with the division of speech and separate development of nations in the Fourth World of the Emergence; or a comparison of Genesis 1 and 2 as they relate creation of all things with the six different creations of man and the seven different creations of things, plants and animals related in the Emergence Myth. These are all beyond the scope of this study.

Several matters are of particular interest in concluding this study.

One is that in speaking of the Navajo traditional religion we are speaking of a relatively young religious system and tradition. Some

elements in its make-up may date back a thousand years or more. One of these elements is the solitary visionary or practitioner of the religious rites. Another is the fear of the dead. However, large segments of both the theology and the form of Navajo traditional religion, probably the largest portion, dates back only five hundred years or less. There can be little doubt that most of the theological structure developed after the Navajo had reached the Southwest. There appears to be evidence that some of the "traditional religion" may actually be no older than about 1918.

Evidence of this conclusion includes the facts that corn and corn pollen play such important roles in the religious ceremony, and corn was not known to the *Diné* until they reached the Southwest. The sacred jewels are those of the Pueblos, and the picturing of the deities is that of the Pueblos. Another evidence is that their own legends place the creation of man largely in the Southwest, in fact, largely within the confines of what is Navajo territory today. Sheep and horses which the Navajo say they had "from the beginning" are a result of the Spanish occupation of the Southwest. The arts of weaving and dry painting are acquisitions from the Pueblos, as most certainly also are some basic chant forms and dances.

The process of acquisition and assimilation of both things and theology is continuing in Navajo culture today. As the early Navajo learned to plant corn, ride horses, herd sheep and weave, so the present day Navajo is borrowing from the dominant anglo culture. He is driving pick-ups, building rectangular frame houses, using electricity, and developing a tribal bureaucracy which ranks along side, if not ahead, of the bureaucracy of the Federal government. As the early Navajo

borrowed the pattern and structure of Pueblo religion in the forms and styles of the dry paintings, corn planting, growing and harvesting ceremonies, and the basic structures of myths, chants, dances and prayers, so the Navajo religion of today is borrowing elements from Christianity, from other tribes, and from the peyote cult. Christianity is many times channeled through the latter.

The dominant thread of the roving Athapascan hunter who sought his "medicine: in a vision is the warp upon which the woof of everything else is woven in. So it was that the *shaman*, or medicine man, became the possessor of the vision and bestowed its curative effects upon others. So it was also that not a single vision, but the plethora of Pueblo chants and myths became the property of the medicine man in the practice of his craft. And so it was that the Pueblo chants which were for the bringing of rain and the good of the entire village were adapted to bring about a total harmony of many with the whole of nature through the cooperation of the deities for the individual, even though on the last night of the healing chant the entire group present could become possessors of some of the spirits blessings.

Today the hallucinogenic vision of the peyote practitioner fits in with the idea of the solitary visionary. Everyone who partakes of the peyote has a vision, but the peyote chief still determines form and shape in his leading of the meeting. Among the Navajo adherents the peyote cult is shaped most frequently to meet the need of an individual and benefit him, although all the participants by right thinking receive some of the blessings.

The Navajo, traditionalist or peyotist, can and does borrow elements of Christian theology. Jesus Christ, though the Navajo does not

accept the Christian concept of sin and its results, frequently does find a place among the other gods as a beneficent force who helps man regain his balance and harmony with the world in which he lives. To a Navajo it need not be at all strange to participate in a traditional religious ceremony, attend a Christian church, and participate in a peyote meeting. Even more commonly borrowed from Christianity is the pantheon of saints from Roman Catholicism. As the early Church corrupted itself by borrowing the pagan Graeco-Roman concept of many gods and transferring their individual abilities and areas of care to the saints, so the Navajo may borrow the saints and transfer them into the realm of the *yei*.

Another matter which the non-Navajo must consider in his study of Navajo theology, or even of the ritual, is that the Navajo has an entirely different concept of good and evil than does the anglo, and especially different than a Christian. To the Christian good is good and evil is evil. He recognizes good as being adversely affected by evil. Even the non-Christian western mind recognizes this in part, though it may mix more good and evil together. For the Navajo good may be evil and evil be good. Generally even the gods are a mixture of the absence of control. This control depends on knowledge, for control is ritual - decreed in the past, taught and learned through the years and at the present.

This writer is quite positive in his personal conviction that certain elements of Navajo theology are to be attributed to the common ancestry of man. As a Christian he believes that these are corruptions of those truths that are taught in the Bible. The purpose of this study was not to prove or disprove these points, simply to set them

down. Several of them are worth mentioning, or mentioning again. Among these are the remnant of a monotheism, nebulous though it might be now, as shown in Chapter III. There are also the relationships between the Emergence Myth and the Creation and Flood accounts in the Bible. Another very significant one which deserves further attention is the relationship of the Holy People, First Man and First Woman, as distinct from the creation of people, to Adam and Eve, created holy by God, as distinct from the rest of mankind, born sinful following the Fall. The Holy People of the myth are referred to as gods. Might not the holiness of Adam and Eve, created in the image of God, be corrupted in oral transmissions over the centuries in such a fashion? The writer hopes in the future to do some comprehensive comparative studies of a number of such issues and hopes that other serious students of religions might do the same.

Several points made in Chapter I bear attention. It was stipulated, for instance, that there could probably never be a perfect understanding of Navajo theology by the non-Navajo mind. This point is demonstrated by Gladys Reichard. It was also noted that it was to be a study of theological concepts within the framework of systematic theology, not of forms. It has not been possible to do this completely because the two are so interwoven. It was further pointed out that it was undertaken out of necessity because all previous works had not approached the religion from the aspect of its theology, but from the form and function aspect. The writer has endeavored to do this within the limitations which he placed upon himself at the beginning, though he has now concluded that it was not possible to do so fully under those limitations.

This study was undertaken to fill a personal need for the author for a greater understanding of the religious beliefs and practices of the Navajo among whom he worked as a Christian missionary. He also felt that it might provide help for others, present or future, who would be working among the Navajo, especially Christian workers. It may be of some value to others, such as social workers who might gain insights into the shaping of present day Navajo society by its traditional religion. Government workers and representatives of industry might profit some in achieving an understanding of why certain areas may not be disturbed or why certain societal mores exist and why these cannot be ignored or disturbed.

A serious student will want to avail himself of the ever increasing wealth of material which is being written on the Navajo. As he reads he will need to sift carefully much of the information, accepting some, discarding other, and blending still other, even when it appears to be at variance with another. Conversation with the Navajo can add real depth to understanding. This is usually only possible after long acquaintance when the Navajo has learned to trust the questioner. If this can be coupled later with attendance at ceremonies themselves it will be enriching indeed. There are some missionaries who question the latter suggestion. Some even forbid it completely, maintaining that it is a poor witness to be in any way connected to a religion which one is trying to displace with another. There is a certain risk, of course, of giving the impression that the two are being syncretized. Personal feelings of the writer are that when and where the opportunity presents itself for personal observation it should be employed, for it will most certainly provide an understanding which no amount of reading could.

Such opportunities will be rare at best. The appended bibliography should be of considerable aid for initial research for those interested in learning more.

Mention was made in the opening chapter that Lutheran theology had a formal principle, the Bible, and a material principle, the Gospel, and that a determination of these two principles, the material and the formal, would be made for Navajo traditional theology. Certainly the oral tradition of the Emergence Myth, the Clan Origin Myths and the healing chants would provide the formal principle. The material principle must then be the recurring theme of Navajo theology - Harmony in Everything. As a Christian finds his peace with God in the forgiveness of sins offered in Jesus Christ, so the traditional Navajo finds his peace in working in harmony with his gods to produce the proper balance through the proper ritual. Much of this principle must have developed during intensive borrowing which took place from other religions. It all had to be kept in order.

Earlier it was felt that Navajo theology was a balance of theocentricity and anthropocentricity, but continuing study, and especially the sorting of information to set down in writing, leaves no doubt that it is anthropocentric in its entirety. Everything is done by man for man's benefit.

The "Beauty Walk" through the theology of Navajo traditional religion has been concluded. That there is a beauty, harmony and symmetry will not be denied, even though the harmony and symmetry are different from what we understand them to be. However, to the Christian it is a false beauty in the sense that the harmony produced is constantly being destroyed by man who then has the responsibility to see that it is

restored. It is a beauty marred by often capricious gods and their whims and taboos. It is a beauty of delusion that man can ever truly achieve or maintain harmony. In short, it is a beauty of sin which is vastly different from the beauty of the righteousness of Christ freely bestowed upon man by God's grace.

The Christian approach to the Navajo in witnessing to the Christian faith might well begin with the thought of harmony. Because this concept of harmony is so central to all of the Navajo religion, the Christian witness could well begin there and move into the concept of harmony as the Christian knows it, the peace that God brings in Jesus Christ between Himself and man, and between man and man. He could show the relationship which might develop for Navajo and anglo as it did for Jew and Gentile in the Christian Church. The illustration of this might well be the words of St. Paul:

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.⁴

The example of St. Paul might also be employed in finding the initial point of contact with the Navajo in spiritual things. This is the point of beginning with the known and proceeding to the unknown. This beginning might be in creation, in the flood, in the savior twins, or numerous other points. The beginning might be the part that the Navajo knows, proceeding then to how the full truth of this story is revealed in the Bible. It could be pointed out that the Navajo stories

⁴Eph. 2:14-18

are incomplete or distorted, limited in the effect of harmony, and how the Bible then reveals the full truth, leading to the true God and to true harmony and happiness in the hope of salvation in Jesus Christ.

If this could be accomplished, such Navajo converts could find a true appreciation in the words:

In beauty I walk.
 With beauty before me I walk.
 With beauty behind me I walk.
 With beauty below me I walk.
 With beauty above me I walk.
 With beauty all around me I walk.
 It is finished in beauty.
 It is finished in beauty.⁵
 It is finished in beauty.

⁵Washington Matthews, "The Night Chant, A Navajo Ceremony," Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History, 6 (May 1902): 159.

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