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#### OUR LADY, TONANTZIN, AND IX CHEL

Maya ceremonies demanded ritualistic drinking and ritualistic purification afterwards. In the Aztec religion a cult revolved about the maguey plant. The goddess Mayauel represented the plant, and she and her 400 sons were associated with pulque and drunkenness. But except at prescribed religious ceremonies, overdrinking was prohibited. Public

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drunkenness was considered a serious crime. An intemperate noble suffered public disgrace, loss of office, even strangulation; a plebeian who had already been convicted for drunkenness was stoned and beaten to death. Old people, however, were, allowed to drink on certain occasions.

Aztec civilization died. The Aztec class of priests, the human sacrifices, and the temples in which those acts were performed disappeared immediately after the conquest. Long-bearded, bare-footed, white-skinned friars came to live with the Indians and began the process of converting them to Christianity. The Indians tore down their temples to build churches and monasteries in their place, though here and there the friars simply turned old pagan shrines into Christian places of worship. Most natives accepted Christianity, but they did not abandon their old cultures and traditions, and Indian Christianity was from the start strongly tinged with pagan values and beliefs.

Faced with the contradictory ideas of their old and new priests, the Indians were naturally confused. They never understood the basic Christian concepts of virtue and sin, punishment and reward in the afterworld. Although the Aztec religion had heavens and hells, they had no moral significance; they were merely thirteen overworlds and nine underworlds. The thirteen heavens were the dwelling places of the gods, according to their rank in the hierarchy.

Nonetheless, Aztec ethics forbade blasphemy, religious skepticism, incest, adultery, theft, murder, witchcraft, and slander. The relationships were similar in many ways between Aztecs and their gods and Catholics and their saints, and parallels existed between Aztec and Christian ceremonies and sacraments. Before the coming of the Spaniards the Aztecs had practiced baptism, confession, penance, and even communion. The midwife baptized the newborn baby with water while addressing prayers to the Water Goddess; Aztec confession cured sicknesses sent by angry gods; the penance imposed by priests included self-mutilation and fasting. Aztec communion consisted of eating dough images of pagan gods and the flesh of sacrificed victims (Madsen 1960, 124–25). Self-sacrifice was a way of ensuring the favor of the gods; the higher the social position of the individual, the greater the amount of suffering required.

To add to the confusion of the new converts, many Indian festivals took place at about the same time of the year as Catholic festivals. Thus the Christian Easter came very close to the Aztec festival Toxcatl, a ceremony held in honor of the god Tezcatlipoca to celebrate the rainy sea-

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son. During the month of Tepeiluitl, which ended about November 1, a ceremony honoring the dead and the rain gods took place; the festival of Etzalqualiztli came close to Corpus Christi; and so on.

The parallels are not surprising if one considers that the seeds of Christianity in Europe also had been sown in pagan soil and had developed into a religion in which the pagan nature of the early converts is easy to discern. Many Christian festivals are European pagan feasts remade for Catholicism. They combined the elements of Christian observance with popular traditions. The religious feasts of old were both sacred and profane; the pagan Europeans celebrated the end of winter, the return of spring, the coming of rainy days, or the time of harvest. Christianity was implanted in the New World in a similar way.

The Spaniards forced Indian children to attend Catholic schools, taught them the new religion, and prohibited the worship of pagan gods. Gradually the Catholic saints assumed most of the functions of the Aztec gods; the symbol of the crucifixion was accepted, as was the Christian God, although not as an exclusive or omnipotent deity. Indians accepted the concept of the soul, but extended it to animals and objects. In Yucatán the Cross was an important feature in Indian villages, but less in association with the passion of Christ than as a magical object, a charm. The Indian pantheon was vast, allowing room for foreign deities. They accepted the Christian saints as they had in ancient times accepted the dieties of other tribes.

The history of the Virgin of Guadalupe is a typical example of Christo-paganism. Near Tenochtitlán was an Aztec temple dedicated to the goddess Tonantzin, the mother of the gods, to whom the Indians used to offer sacrifices. One day, on that very spot, a dark Virgin appeared to a young Indian, Cuaupatoahuac, who had recently been baptized and given the name of Juan Diego. The legendary date of the Virgin's first appearance is 1531, and "by the 1550's an incipient Indian ceremonial had come into existence surrounding the Virgin's miraculous powers and cures" (Gibson 1964, 133). The clergy tried to arrest the growth of the cult. They did not believe in the miraculous apparition and the image of the dark Virgin painted on Juan Diego's cloak, and they thought that the sudden devotion of the Indians for the Virgin was suspect. Father Bernardino de Sahagún wrote of the Lady of Guadalupe:

In this place they had a temple dedicated to the mother of the gods, whom they called Tonantzin, which means "our mother." There were many sacrifices in her honor. . . . And so they come to visit this Tonantzin from afar, as much as before, which devotion is suspicious, because everywhere there

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are many churches for Our Lady and they do not attend those; but they come from great distances here. (quoted in Thompson 1960, 15)

Another example of Christo-paganism is the cult of the Señor de Chalma, a life-sized Christ on a cross who appeared two years after the Tonantzin vision in a cave where the Aztec god Oztocoteotl had been venerated (Madsen 1960, 136).

Not all of the Aztec gods had been destroyed. Many had been hidden in caves, dropped into lakes, buried in forests, and had not been forgotten. Images and statues considered antiquities were still worshipped here and there. Brantz Mayer was informed that the keepers of the University of Mexico sometimes found garlands of flowers around a "hideous" statue exhibited in the building (Mayer 1844, 109).

The Maya Lacandons of Chiapas still offered incense in the ruined temples. The lonely forests of Yucatán were still inhabited by demons and spirits. Many villages, said Nelson Reed, had books written by Chilam Balam, who had prophesied the coming of the whites (Reed 1964, 39). Stephens reports that the Indians living near the ruins of Zayi said that "on Good Friday of every year music was heard sounding among the ruins" (Stephens [1843] 1963, 2:14). Tlaloc, the Rain God, was worshipped all over Mexico. The Mixes of southern Mexico, isolated in their mountain fortress, venerated the spirits of lightning, of the earth, and of the clouds; and the Mixtecs of Oaxaca, said Mathieu de Fossey, refused to let strangers undertake diggings in the ruined cities of their ancestors (Fossey 1857, 376). Among the half-pagan Mayas, there was confusion between the Virgin and Ix Chel, the old Moon Goddess.