

millennia ago mainly by land. Probably both theories are correct, the native tribes of North America coming eastward from Asia as descendants of the “Nagas, the Serpents of Wisdom” (*SD II:182*), and the more highly developed Olmec, Mixtec, Toltec, Mayan, and Inca civilizations coming westward from what was then Atlantis. This would account for the difference in their ideas as well as the great difference in the levels of their civilization. There is archeological and linguistic evidence that the Aztecs migrated into Mexico from North America. They, then, would represent an intermixing of the two streams, since they obviously got much of their culture from the older Mayan civilization.

The name “Indian” for the natives of the Americas is derived from Christopher Columbus’ belief that he had discovered a western sea route to the “Indies” (which, to Europeans at that time, included India, China, Japan, and the Malay archipelago) when he landed, in 1492, first on Watling Island in the Bahamas and subsequently on Cuba and Hispaniola, then in his second expedition also on the Lesser Antilles, Puerto Rico, and Jamaica in 1493, then also on Trinidad on his third expedition in 1498, and finally also on the coast of Central America on his fourth expedition in 1502. Obviously, the natives themselves did not, until recently, adopt that name. In fact, in North America, some of the tribal names translate as “human being” (e.g., Anishnabe, Inuit, Dene, or Numuna, the first being the name the Ojibwa and Chippewa had for themselves; the last being the name the Comanches had for themselves). “Lenape” (sometimes called the Delaware) means “genuine people” and “Lenni Lenape,” another name they called themselves, means “really genuine people.” In Central and South America, many of the civilizations were named after an area in which remains of their culture were discovered. Specific articles, therefore, will follow the current practice of naming.

It is commonplace in theosophical literature to find an essential unity underlying all the various religions of the world. Blavatsky says of the caves of Ellora in western India and the temples found in the Deccan of India as well as temples at Chichén Itzá in the Mexican Yucatán or at Copán in Guatemala, “They present such features of resemblance that it seems impossible to escape the conviction that they were built by peoples moved by the same religious ideas, and that had reached an equal level of highest civilization in arts and sciences” (*IU I:561*). And she adds that even if they were *not* racially or culturally connected, they were “at least of the same religion — the one