

taught in the oldest Mysteries" (*ibid.*, 567) because, she says, "There never was, nor can there be more than one universal religion; for there can be but one truth concerning God. Like an immense chain whose upper end, the alpha, remains invisibly emanating from a Deity — in *statu abscondito* with every primitive theology — it encircles our globe in every direction; it leaves not even the darkest corner unvisited, before the other end, the omega, turns back on its way to be again received where it first emanated. On this divine chain was strung the exoteric symbology of every people. Their variety of form is powerless to affect their substance, and under their diverse ideal types of the universe of matter, symbolizing its vivifying principles, the uncorrupted immaterial image of the spirit of being guiding them is the same" (*IU* 1:560).

The specific articles referred to above attempt to point out parallels with theosophy wherever possible since one does find hints of esoteric ideas — mystery teachings — in the myths of many of the ancient cultures of the Americas. Yet, it is also obvious that some of the tribes and civilizations had religious views, as well as practices such as human sacrifice and cannibalism, significantly different from theosophy and unrelated to any mystery teachings or esoteric ideas.

NATIVE CENTRAL AMERICAN RELIGIONS

The earliest natives of Mexico and Central America of which we have any knowledge were the Olmecs ("Rubber People"), whose name seems to have been given to them because that area is where people later learned to tap the trees for making rubber. They are sometimes called the La Venta culture after the site in Mexico where remains of their civilization were first discovered. Evidence suggests that their territory extended from central Mexico to El Salvador, with its cultural center primarily in the coastal areas of southern Veracruz and Tabasco. Their empire and culture lasted at least from 1200 BCE to 300 CE. Although they possessed hieroglyphic writing, an accurate calendar, and exquisite sculpture and gem carving, little is known about their religious beliefs. They carved huge stone heads, presumably anthropomorphic representations of their gods, weighing up to 36,000 pounds (16,300 kg.) which they transported more than 50 miles (80 km.) to their present locations. Carvings show the sun, carrying a child in the form of a